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Contributors



Spending a day with gorgeous foals is most horsey folk's idea of heaven. **Kelly McCarthy-Maine** did just that. Find out what she learnt about safely handling youngsters on p110.



New treatments for laminitis are still being discovered, from maggots to cryotherapy, as **Lucy Turner** found out – read more on p86.



Can leg-yield benefit showjumpers? **Céleste Wilkins** asked Tom Davison for flatwork advice for jumpers and dressage horses – read more on p20.

Welcome

The weather hasn't been particularly kind while we've been putting together this April issue of *Horse&Rider*, but looking at the beautiful, sunny pictures from last summer's shoot with the Davisons definitely made us smile. And the excellent exercises and top tips from this riding dynasty are sure to help you, whether you prefer dressage or jumping (p20).

While a lot of horsey wisdom is passed down the generations, in some areas new thinking is changing the way we care for our horses and improving their wellbeing. This is definitely true for our two veterinary topics this issue – laminitis (p86) and worming. And the latest thinking on worming means throwing out almost everything you were taught as a child and embracing research into the risk – and reality – of wormer resistance. The good news? All of us horse owners can make a difference by following best practice advice. The bad news? Most of us are still stuck in our ways. Don't assume that what you're doing is correct – turn to p76 to get clued-up, then speak to your vet for advice on your particular situation. Make 2015 the year you begin the fight against resistance.



Louise Kittle, Editor
Horse AND Rider

Louise started riding aged six. She's a qualified BHS IntSM and owns Ted, a four-year-old Irish gelding. Ted is just beginning his ridden career, and Louise hopes he'll make a great all-rounder when he finishes growing!



This month with the *H&R* team...

I spent the day with showing guru Lynn Russell and four gorgeous equine models to put together our brilliant complete guide to preparing for the show ring (part 2 is on p94). What did I learn from the day? The devil is in the detail, and Lynn's eagle eye didn't miss a thing. But the real skill is in how to make the most of your horse's good points and disguise his weaker ones. Lynn's tips for the perfect mane (hogged or plaited) are unmissable – better get practising, then!

Alison, Contributing Editor
Horse AND Rider

Discover our team's wealth of horsey experience at ***horseandrideruk.com***

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April 2015

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Cover photo by Arnd Bronkhorst



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Find what you want, from insurance to riding holidays, in our classified ads

Horseworld

Spring
into action





With the worst of the winter behind us, spring is a time of new beginnings, fresh starts and foals at foot – maybe even a spring clean? However it makes you feel, the days are longer, allowing more time in the day to do the things you love. There's a lot to look forward to, and now is a perfect time to dust off those boots or that competition jacket and enjoy the blossoming outdoors with your four-legged friends.

Injured rider runs London Marathon

A racing secretary who fell from her horse on the gallops in Newmarket last year, leaving her with a fractured and dislocated ankle, will run the London Marathon in April. Cat Elliott will be running for Magpas Helimedix, the team that was despatched to her aid. Magpas attends cases of life-threatening illness or major trauma within the east of England. The charity operates a helicopter and rapid response car staffed by highly-trained doctors and paramedics, many of whom volunteer their time to work for Magpas.

As a result of her fracture and dislocation, Cat now has two plates and 11 screws holding her ankle together. The London Marathon will mark just over a year since the accident and Cat is hoping to raise £2,500 – the cost for Magpas to fly to her aid and the care they provided. To sponsor her, go to uk.virginmoneygiving.com/CatherineElliott





Eventing returns to Hickstead

Eventing is set to return to the Longines Royal International Horse Show (28 July – 2 August) with an exciting new format. The Amlin Plus Eventers' Challenge will be replacing the former Eventing Grand Prix class, which had been in place at Hickstead since 1998. Only event riders will be allowed to compete, allowing the fences to be more technical and demanding. The class will be held on 30 July and will be a great chance to see some of the country's top names in action. For more information and tickets, visit hickstead.co.uk

Star search begins

Qualifier dates for the 2015 SEIB Search for a Star and SEIB Racehorse to Riding Horse Show Championship begin in April, with qualifiers across the country. The series encourages amateur riders to produce top-level horses in the show ring and provides the chance to achieve a dream of riding in the final at Horse of the Year Show (7–11 October).

Schedules, entry forms and the latest news are avaliable from search4astar.org.uk





Miniature horse joins LA law enforcement

Valor, a six-month-old miniature horse is set to join Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department as the 'face' of law enforcement.

Valor is part of Gentle Carousel Miniature Therapy Horses and her job will be to reach out to people who have suffered traumatic incidents, including serious illness and crime. Her instatement has been met with an overwhelmingly positive public response.

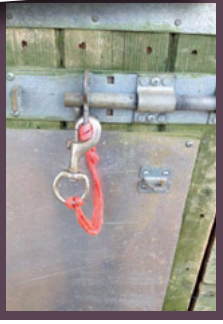
Photos: Andrew Watkins, ES Photography, Samantha Lamb

Horseworld

INVENTIVE BALER TWINE RECYCLING



1. Tying up your trusty (or not so trusty) steed – if it's really thick twine, it might be best to split it for easier breaking.



2. Securing your door clip to the stable door to avoid any late night break-outs.



Accidental Appaloosa discovery

History books state that the Appaloosa horses of North America were imported by the Spanish. However, Scott Engstrom, an Appaloosa breeder from New Zealand, has a theory that the horses actually came from Asia. Connor Woodman, author and TV presenter, accompanied Scott to Kyrgyzstan to discover if her theory held up. Sixty-nine-year-old Scott made the arduous journey across a 4,200m mountain bypass on horseback in search of Kyrgyz nomads and their indigenous horses, to retrieve the DNA evidence she needed to prove her theory. Horse expert and geneticist, Dr Cothran, suggests that the DNA shows it was probably people coming over from Asia, rather than the Spanish, who took the horses to America, but it is unclear when this happened.

Charity success

Global equine welfare charity, The Brooke, has successfully worked with the Ethiopian government in the region of Halaba to change by-laws, preventing many working equines from enduring prolonged suffering.

Abandonment of working horses is a problem in Ethiopia – when horses are too sick or weak, they are left on the streets to die. These animals are often found in irreversible conditions, so the only humane solution is euthanasia.

The law previously stated that an owner had to give consent before an animal was euthanized, but when abandoned, finding the owner could be impossible. The change will allow The Brooke's teams to euthanize abandoned equines, when extreme injuries or disease mean they are beyond medical help, relieving unnecessary suffering.

Police horse Albert earns retirement

Eighteen-year-old Irish Draught X Thoroughbred, Albert, has been working for Thames Valley Police since April 2005. Later this year, he will retire to The Horse Trust in Speen, Buckinghamshire.

Albert is currently the longest-serving horse in the force, and was named runner-up of the RSPCA and Daily Mirror Animal Hero Awards 2014. He also recieved a Chief Constable's Commendation for his bravery during an English Defence League (EDL) march in 2012. He is described by his trainer as "an absolute servant – absolutely brilliant" and is liked by everyone he meets due to his charming character.



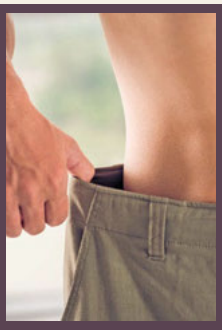
College stud welcomes horses from World Horse Welfare



Writtle College, in Essex, has welcomed two young horses, Revel and Alaska, from World Horse Welfare to the Lordships Stud. They will stay for the duration of their formative years and be backed by the students, before being returned to the charity for rehoming. The horses will be involved in student activities for practical learning of equine behaviour, physiotherapy, stable and youngstock management.

Revel, a 13.2hh piebald, was found in a field with 20 others, being fed mouldy bread and standing in sewage before being rescued. Alaska, a 14.1hh strawberry roan, was one of 63 horses rescued last year from a single farm – the owner could no longer cope with the financial and physical responsibilty of keeping horses.

Caroline Brace, Writtle College's Stud Groom, explained that the college was excited to have created this link with World Horse Welfare, giving back to the equine industry and an ideal opportunity for the students to get behind the iniative.



3. A quick-fix belt for trousers or overalls.

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Easter event egg-stravaganza

Make the most of the long weekend and do something horsey this Easter. There are lots of events providing fun for all the family, here are some ideas to get you started...





Family Fun Day

4 April

Kempton Park, Sunbury-on-Thames, Middlesex

Make the weekend extra-special with an afternoon of flat racing and free Easter family entertainment. Along with a free Easter egg on entry, there is face painting, an Easter craft workshop and an Easter egg hunt to keep everyone occupied between races.

Admission: Adults £12 in advance, £16 on the gate. U18s go free when accompanied by an adult. For £22, upgrade to the 'winner's package', which includes admission, £10 food and drink voucher, a racecard voucher, a £2 Tote betting voucher and a voucher for a free visit to Kempton Park (on selected dates).

kempton.thejockeyclub.co.uk

Burnham Market International Horse Trials

2–4 April

Sussex Farm, Burnham Market, Norfolk

One of East Anglia's finest events, where spectators can search out top-level horses and riders competing in a range of classes from BE100 to CIC***. Alongside the top-class competition, there are more than 50 shops, bungee trampolines, bouncy castles and a climbing wall to keep the whole family entertained.

Admission: Advance day tickets are from £7 for adults and £3 for children. Three-day tickets are £20 and £8 respectively.

musketeer.co.uk

Betfair Lambourn Open Day

3 April

Lambourn, Berkshire

Across Lambourn Valley, more than 30 trainers will open their yards to the public for a unique opportunity to see racehorses in their training establishments. Many of the yards will have special exhibits and demonstrations.

Tour the stables in the morning then, in the afternoon, the central arena opens with a full programme of impressive equine and country-related shows and demonstrations. Top jockeys will go head-to-head in puissance showjumping, in addition to camel racing and a falconry display.

Admission: £15 each for the full day or £7 each for the afternoon, children under 12 go free and proceeds of the day will go to charities, including the Air Ambulance.

lambourn.info/open-day

Photos: Toby Connors, Mirenska Olga / Shutterstock.com

Horseworld

INVENTIVE BALER TWINE RECYCLING



4. Plaited doormats last forever and are a good time occupier if you make them yourself.



5. Display your favourite horsey photos or rosettes across your tack room or lorry.



Marbury Farm Fun Ride

6 April

Hurst Hall Farm, Marbury, Cheshire

Enjoy a relaxing ride with friends at this local fun ride. The Marbury Farm Ride is an eight-mile, all-grass cross-country fun ride, including more than 100 optional jumps, long gallops and a woodland trail, set in 350 acres of beautiful Cheshire countryside. Take it all in at your own pace, be it leisurely or like the wind.

Admission: Entry £15 per horse.

marburyfarmride.co.uk

South Notts Point-to-Point Challenge

6 April

Thorpe Lodge, Newark, Nottinghamshire

There are many point-to-point meets across the country this weekend, and for many it's an Easter tradition with a fun and family-friendly atmosphere.

The annual South Notts meeting includes the special feature of the South Notts challenge at the end of the day, where riders have the chance to complete a 1.5-mile circuit of Thorpe Lodge. You can also expect trade stands, bookmakers and a licensed bar.

Admission: Adults £10, U16s go free.

southnottshunt.com

World Horse Welfare Fun Day

3–6 April

Penny Farm, Blackpool, Lancashire

A day out with a good cause at World Horse Welfare's Penny Farm, where you can meet their 65 rescued residents going through rehabilitation for rehoming. Enjoy a walk around the paddocks and activity trails, followed by a stop for refreshments at the café. Extra Easter-themed fun includes an Easter egg hunt, tombola and a colouring competition.

World Horse Welfare's other rescue and rehabilitation centre, Hall Farm in Norfolk, is hosting a similar event with an indoor dog show.

Admission: Free

worldhorsewelfare.org



6. Replace lost or broken leg straps or fillet strings on your horse's rugs to ensure he stays covered up.



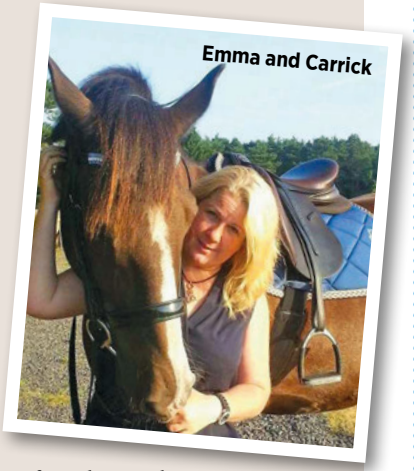
7. Tie your plants to supporting sticks to help them grow straight up.



8. Scrunch it up to create a scourer and use it to clean your feed buckets.

ARIAT Inspiration of the month

Emma Bridle inspires her daughter Laura following a sad loss


Emma and Carrick

My mum is one of the strongest people I know. She is able to cope with anything that is thrown at her – family issues, sorting out parent-teacher conferences at schools for myself and my sister – the list goes on and on. Unfortunately, we lost a dear family member in September, who was close to all our hearts – especially my mother's. It was her horse, Carrick.

Mum spent four years rebacking him, and gaining his trust and love. They were inseparable – like two peas in a pod – they had that unsurpassable bond between human and horse. She has lost her her soulmate and companion – Carrick would have done anything for my mother.

Through this time we were all heartbroken, but Mum kept going. We still miss him dearly and he will always be a massive part of our lives. I have never known someone change such a troubled horse into a gentle and loving animal.

I want to be just like my mum when I grow up – a brave, strong and courageous woman. I want her to know we are all here for her and how proud we are of her. I don't know what I would do without her.



Tell us why your horsey inspiration deserves this award, and they could win Ariat Olympia breeches and a Team Waterproof jacket, worth £255!

Send a clear photo, SAE for its return, and contact details for you and your inspiration, to: Ariat Inspiration of the Month, *Horse&Rider*, Marlborough House, Headley Road, Grayshott, Surrey GU26 6LG or email georgia@djmurphy.co.uk

For full terms and conditions, visit horseandridercompetitions.co.uk

ARIAT

For information on Ariat products: 0845 600 3209, ariat-europe.com or email info@ariat-europe.com

What's on TV for horse lovers

Tune in to **Horse&Country TV** this April on Sky 253 or online at everwhere.horseandcountry.tv. New animated children's series **Wendy** premieres daily from 6 April. **Rudall's Round-Up** comes from Harthill Stud and Team Chasing. Watch and enjoy the **Global Champions Tour 2015** kick off from Miami Beach, and **FEI World Cup** showjumping and dressage from Las Vegas. The **Badminton 2015 Course Walk** can be seen from Sunday 19 April. For complete listings, visit **horseandcountry.tv**


New series – Wendy

Tweet box

Find out what our favourite horsey people are saying on Twitter this month

@LeedsDonkeys
(The Donkey Sanctuary's Leeds centre)
"Marlon says have a terrific Tuesday everyone!"



@FWeventing
(International eventer, Francis Whittington)
"Dropped Max off at school today. Left Amber there walking around the classroom. Forgot I had her with me! Headteacher found me as I left. Doh!"

@JayTigerHalim
(International eventer and showjumper, Jay Halim)
"@LauraB_dressage Hi mum xxxx"



@Ems1288
(Freelance rider and livery yard manager, Emily Clark)
"Best birthday ever! #snow #hunting #fitzwilliamhunt"



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- A Dodson & Horrell goody bag



A four-time Olympian, Richard has been at the forefront of the international dressage world for three decades. From his base in Staffordshire, he runs a mixed yard of dressage horses with his wife, Gillian, and showjumpers with his two sons, Tom and Joe.

Dodson & Horrell proudly sponsors Richard, providing feed for all Team Davison's horses. With 75 years' experience, Dodson & Horrell's wealth of expertise is used to formulate its feeds, supplements and herbal products, ensuring horses receive the very best nutrition.

The VIP day at Richard's yard will take place on 21 July. Winners must be available on this day, and are responsible for their own travel to and from Richard's yard near Uttoxeter, Staffordshire.

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Q For how long has Dodson & Horrell been making feed?

Tie-breaker: In 50 words or fewer, tell us why you should win the visit to Richard's yard.

For more information, visit dodsonandhorrell.com

To enter: Answer the question and tie-breaker on the competition entry form on page 160 or visit horseandridercompetitions.co.uk to enter online. Entries must be received by 30 April 2015. Visit horseandridercompetitions.co.uk for full terms and conditions. No purchase necessary.



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WEATHERBEETA

Share, write, tweet...

If you want to comment on an article in Horse&Rider *or share your thoughts, then drop a line to Georgia Guerin – address on p18. Remember to include your contact details and jacket size!*



Tricky situations

I have just read the letter in your March issue entitled 'Singled out'. As the owner of a livery yard, I have witnessed many occasions where owners are picked on and bullied by other liveries. This causes many problems on the yard and causes me to lose perfectly good clients – even though my yard is well-run by qualified staff and we have good facilities.

The lady in question says that her yard owner "doesn't want to get involved". I sympathise with said yard owner – if she goes to other liveries with her complaints, they will deny any wrong doing, take the huff and leave. These personal issues can't be solved by the yard owner. It is not their fault that adults who should behave better can't do so.

Horses and yards seem to bring out the worst in some people, making running a livery yard a very difficult and stressful job. People are constantly coming and going over things you can do nothing about – and believe me, I have tried – but in the end, you just have to let these things run their course.

I can only take action if people are breaking the yard rules. Whispering behind backs, pulling faces and not being friends with someone is not something I can prevent. It is not a school playground and I am not a social worker or a therapist, just a yard owner.

Anonymous, via letter



Special guest

Reading the March issue, 'Wedding bells' brought back happy memories of our wedding day back in 1975. God willing, it will be our 40th wedding anniversary this September. I wanted photos of us with my much-loved Connemara, Daniel and, although unable to take him to the venue, we arranged for the photographer to take photos of us with him where he lived after a friend had kindly got him ready for us.

Jean Wright, via email

Sharing stories

I am planning a book containing the most sensitive and comprehensive ways to plan and prepare for the fateful day of the death of your horse. I am keen to hear from people who have been through this sad loss – experiences, preparations and regrets – anything shared would be so gratefully and sensitivley recieved. If you can help, please email me – wharton@brimble.fsnet.co.uk

Brimble Wharton, via email



Horse&Rider *thank you...*

The sender of our star letter will receive a Toggi Clementine jacket, worth £125 – available in black, in sizes 8–20. Waterproof and breathable to protect against showers, while ensuring you don't overheat, this stylish three-quarter length jacket is designed by riders, for riders. With a two-way front zip and extra-wide zip-up side vents, this jacket offers freedom of movement and an easy fit over the saddle. To find your local stockist, see toggi.com or call 0113 2707000.

Toggi



Confidence boost

Five years ago, I had a cross-country accident when my pony, Summer, and I misjudged a fence. She landed on top of me, and I shattered my coccyx, broke my arm and injured my pelvis. Following the accident, my confidence was very shaken and I thought I wouldn't overcome my fear of falling.

Due to the long recovery, I had sadly outgrown Summer. After a few months, I found a horse for loan – Duffy – a showjumper ready for semi-retirement. I instantly fell in love with her soft nature and soon realised how much we could help each other. I could give her an enjoyable semi-retirement and in return she could give me my confidence back. In the summer, we went to our first show, jumping 90cm, and came fourth. We can't wait to do more! Thank you Duffy!

Neve Taylor, via email

PET OF THE MONTH



My dog, Hugo, is tack room guard but he's so gentle that he regularly travels on the train and tube with me!
Owned by Charlotte Dickin, West Sussex

The owner of each pet featured will receive £25-worth of vouchers to spend at viovet.co.uk, the UK's top-rated online pet and equine retailer. VioVet has a huge range of supplements, medications, pet food, tack, rugs and more, all at great prices.

Have your say!

We asked you on our Facebook page whether, considering these days it is unacceptable to ride without a hat, you thought it should be the same for body protectors, too?



Nancy Little
I never go out without mine. I've ridden the same horse for three years and trust him completely, but you just never know what could happen on a ride. They aren't uncomfortable. They aren't ugly. They aren't expensive. I don't see any excuse not to wear one.

Chris Carr
Being a bit older, I don't do much more than trot around the school. Last year, I had a canter and fell off. A body protector would have made no difference at all to my fractured collar bone, broken finger and torn hamstring. For cross-country and hacking, I agree they are sensible, but they can also give a false sense of security.

Beth Hicks
I think it depends on what you are doing. Definitely for cross-country and, for me, hacking as well. It also depends on how confident a rider you are – I think for some people, wearing one may give them confidence to try something a little different.

Georgina Dickinson
Definitely. Body protectors aren't that much more expensive than a riding hat. However, my local tack shop charges for fitting them, which I don't think is right.

Catherine Sheppard
I think it's right that they are worn for cross-country. A lot of people are using them more now without the need to make it compulsory.

To have your say about horsey issues of the day, visit facebook.com/HorseandRiderMag

If you want to share your thoughts, send your letters to Georgia Guerin, Letters Editor, *Horse&Rider*, D J Murphy (Publishers) Ltd, Marlborough House, Headley Road, Grayshott, Surrey GU26 6LG, with photos if they're relevant and an SAE for their return, or email **georgia@djmurphy.co.uk**. We look forward to hearing from you!

H&R's TOP TWEETS

Our favourite tweets @HorseandRiderUK

@Rochdalelass
good beach reading in Langkawi



@HSEquestrian
Had a play with the @HorseandRiderUK grid exercise. My helper miscalculated the distance oops! #blooper



@OurDoePark
If I stand on my tip hooves I can just see over this door :) You got any carrots?



@Cesca_Beswick
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PART ONE *In this feature...* ➤ Use leg-yield to create an adjustable horse

Our trainer



Tom Davison is the son of Olympic Dressage rider Richard Davison. Having represented GB on numerous jumping teams, he now focuses on running the business, and coaching clients across Europe and the USA.

Our models



Gillian Davison is Richard's wife, and Tom and Joe's mum. She's a former point-to-point and National Hunt jockey, and event rider. Gill produces the family's young dressage stars and competes up to Grand Prix level.



Joe Davison is Tom's younger brother. He has been a member of Team GB's Junior and Young Rider teams, and is currently competing a string of seven horses across Europe.

Our equine pupils

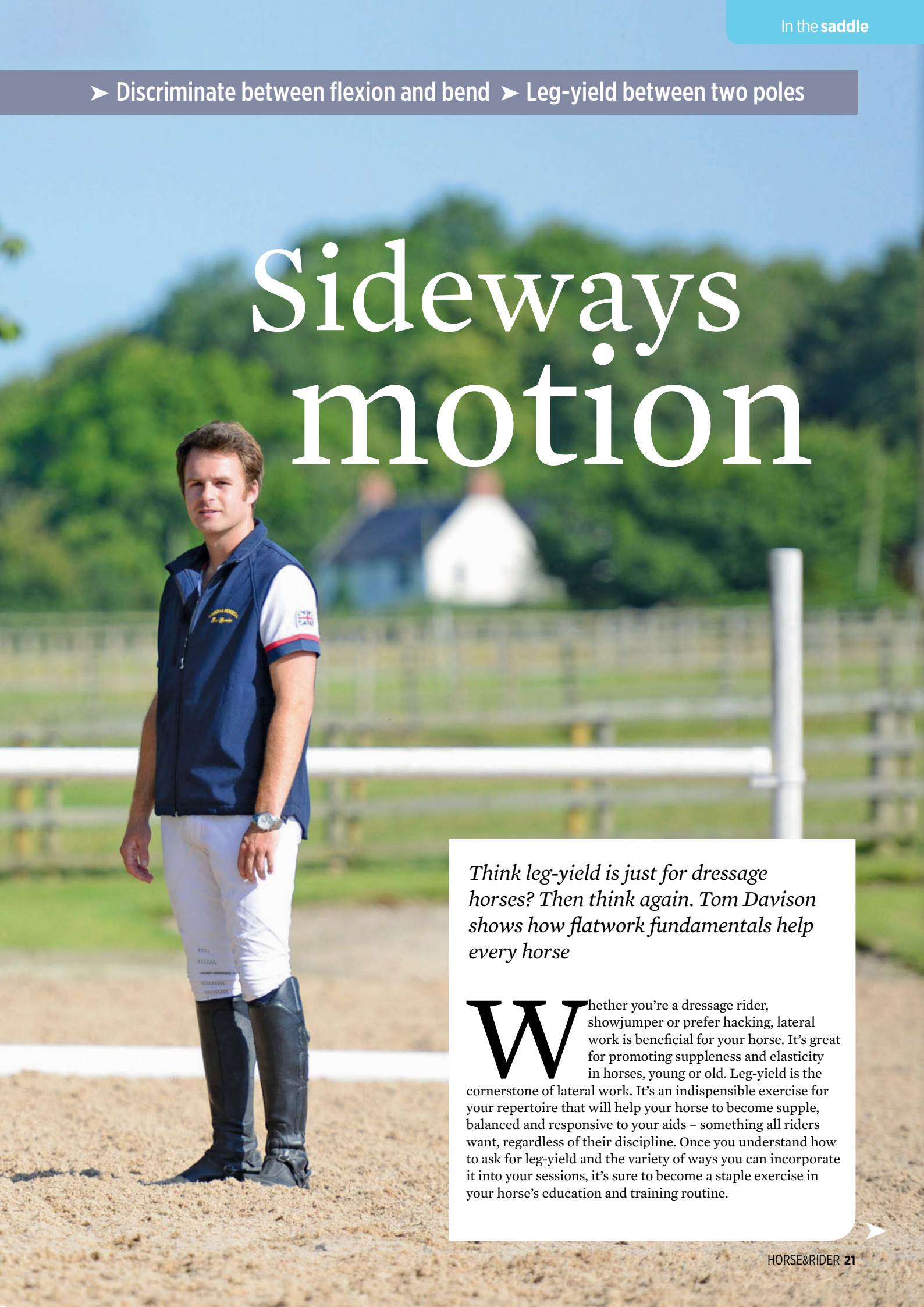
Alfranco is a 10-year-old gelding who competes in dressage at Grand Prix.

Frederick is an eight-year-old gelding who showjumps at 1.40m level with Joe.

As told to Céleste Wilkins. Photos: Bob Atkins

➤ Discriminate between flexion and bend ➤ Leg-yield between two poles

Sideways motion



Think leg-yield is just for dressage horses? Then think again. Tom Davison shows how flatwork fundamentals help every horse

Whether you're a dressage rider, showjumper or prefer hacking, lateral work is beneficial for your horse. It's great for promoting suppleness and elasticity in horses, young or old. Leg-yield is the cornerstone of lateral work. It's an indispensible exercise for your repertoire that will help your horse to become supple, balanced and responsive to your aids – something all riders want, regardless of their discipline. Once you understand how to ask for leg-yield and the variety of ways you can incorporate it into your sessions, it's sure to become a staple exercise in your horse's education and training routine.

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Image courtesy of Gillian Higgins, horsesinsideout.com

Flexion or bend?

In dressage circles, flexion is considered a small amount of bend in the neck or near the head, where the rider can just see the eye of the horse. Bend typically is considered to be consistent through the whole body. The neck vertebrae have considerable flexion ability, but there is less flexion possible in the body and ribcage area, due to the shape of the vertebrae (see image, left). Each thoracic and lumbar vertebra can flex a tiny amount, which when considered together provides some flexion, but not as much as is commonly thought. People often use the term 'bending around the inside leg' when talking about leg-yield, but this is technically incorrect because the movement is not in line with pressure-release – moving away from the leg.

Get started

When you're starting out teaching your horse leg-yield, it helps to have someone on the ground, or arena mirrors, so you know when you're getting it right. What I'm looking for in a correct leg-yield is for the horse's body to remain almost parallel to the long side of the arena. There should be a little bit of flexion away from the direction you're asking the horse to travel in. You should be travelling sideways and the rhythm of the gait must remain the same. Balance, rhythm and responsiveness are all key to a good leg-yield.

The aids

Your inside leg initiates the movement sideways by gently nudging to ask your horse to move away from it. The inside rein is used to ask for a little neck flexion and the outside rein is key in regulating this flexion, because too much neck flexion or bend leaves the horse vulnerable to falling out through his shoulder. Your outside leg should stay a little behind the girth to regulate the placement of the hindquarters, and it can also ask the horse to move forward again if you feel he is falling sideways out of balance and rhythm.

Leg-yield can be ridden in walk, trot or canter, and on circles or on straight lines. When you're teaching your horse to leg-yield, start out in walk. This gives you both more time to learn the response and reduces the pressure on your horse during the learning process. Add variety to your schooling session by incorporating leg-yield into your school figures.



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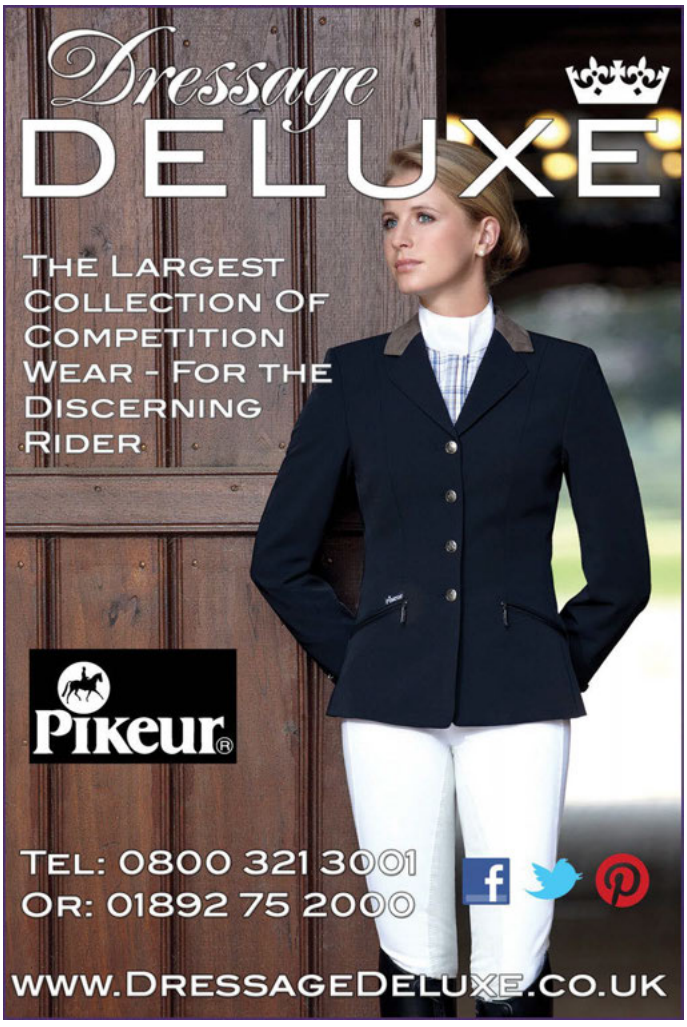
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Add it into your flatwork

Begin your horse's leg-yield education in walk on a straight line, and leg-yield to the track. You can do this from the centre line or the three-quarter line. Horses are naturally drawn to the track, so this is an easy way to start out when you're both learning the aids.

You can also ride leg-yield on a circle. Start on a smaller circle and leg-yield out onto a larger one. This is a great exercise to develop suppleness and responsiveness to the aids, but make sure you're well established in leg-yield on a straight line before you move onto the circle. This exercise can be performed in all three gaits, and can really help develop strength and suppleness in your horse.

If you find that your horse is unbalanced while leg-yielding on a straight line, develop it correctly by doing a few steps, then riding straight, then leg-yielding a few more steps and carrying on until you've reached the track in this staircase-like pattern.

COMMON FAULTS



Your horse falls out through his outside shoulder and lacks lateral balance

Why this happens This happens when the rider asks for too much leg-yield and has too much neck bend to the inside, as a result of poor outside rein contact. It feels like the horse is unbalanced and leading with his shoulders, with almost no crossing steps.

How to fix it Take a more consistent rein contact and be aware of how the leg-yield is developing. If your horse starts off well but then begins to fall out through his shoulders, have a break for a few strides, ask him to go forward and straight, then correct the rein contact and continue.



Your horse doesn't move sideways enough when asked

Why this happens A common misconception is that leg-yield occurs when the rider pushes the horse sideways with a constantly applied leg aid. In fact, too much leg will deaden your horse's reactions.

How to fix it Use short, sharp leg aids from the inside leg and reward the horse when he responds by removing the pressure.



Apply it to your jumping

Even if you prefer jumping to dressage, you and your horse can still benefit from leg-yield. Start out with a single pole, placed halfway down the arena on the track, allowing several strides before and after the pole. Start out in trot over the pole, aiming for the middle. Focus on keeping straight on the approach and landing. Once you're confident in trot over the middle of the pole, increase the difficulty by turning onto the three-quarter line and leg-yielding towards the pole. Aim to trot over the outside quarter of the pole.

Once you're confident that you can leg-yield towards the pole and meet it in a balanced and rhythmical trot, increase the difficulty again by leg-yielding on the approach and also after the pole. Start on the three-quarter line on your approach and once you've trotted over the pole, leg-yield back to the three-quarter line. You can add variety and difficulty by leg-yielding a few strides left and right on both sides of the pole, making sure your horse stays in balance and in a nice, rhythmical trot. You can even turn the pole into a small fence and repeat this exercise. This exercise can improve your horse's responses to your aids as well as his lateral suppleness, which will benefit his jumping and wellbeing, too.

Distances for poles
Six strides – 22m/72ft







Leg-yield is really useful to have in your toolkit for times when you need to adjust your horse's stride

Between two poles

Leg-yield is really useful to have in your toolkit for times when you need to adjust your horse's length of stride in a related distance. Some horses have long, ground-covering strides, or can land too far into a related distance. Rather than having to add in a short, choppy stride before take-off, a bit of strategically placed leg-yield can create the extra space your horse needs to retain an even, rhythmical, good-quality canter and clear the second part of the related distance.

To practise this skill, place two poles six canter strides apart. Canter down the poles in a normal six strides until you're comfortable. Then try adding one more canter stride, to make seven, down the poles. Your horse needs to be a little more collected, and this starts even before you get to the first pole. Set up a good-quality canter around the corner that will carry you down the line. It needs to be full of impulsion, and your horse needs to engage his back end. Once that's easy for you, try eight strides. It's a challenge, and your horse must engage his hindlegs and really sit on his hocks. This is where you can add in the leg-yield. Leg-yield him a little bit to the left or right to keep his hindquarters engaged, and maintain a quality canter while still collecting it for an even eight strides. This is a really good test of your horse's suppleness, control and hindquarter strength.

Take it further

Try lengthening your horse's stride down the poles, doing one less stride for five strides, then four if you can. Use a half-seat to allow your horse to move freely underneath you. Alternate between collected canter and lengthening down the poles.

Strength and suppleness

Leg-yield can benefit you, whether you're working on your horse's responses on the flat or when you're practicing courses of jumps. You can try leg-yield on a 20m circle, asking your horse to step progressively sideways on the circle, until you're riding a 10m circle. Then leg-yield back out again. This builds your horse's strength and suppleness, and can come in handy when you're riding bending lines or quick turns in the jump-off. The manoeuverability and control you gain from these exercises are sure to benefit you as a rider and spice up your flatwork.

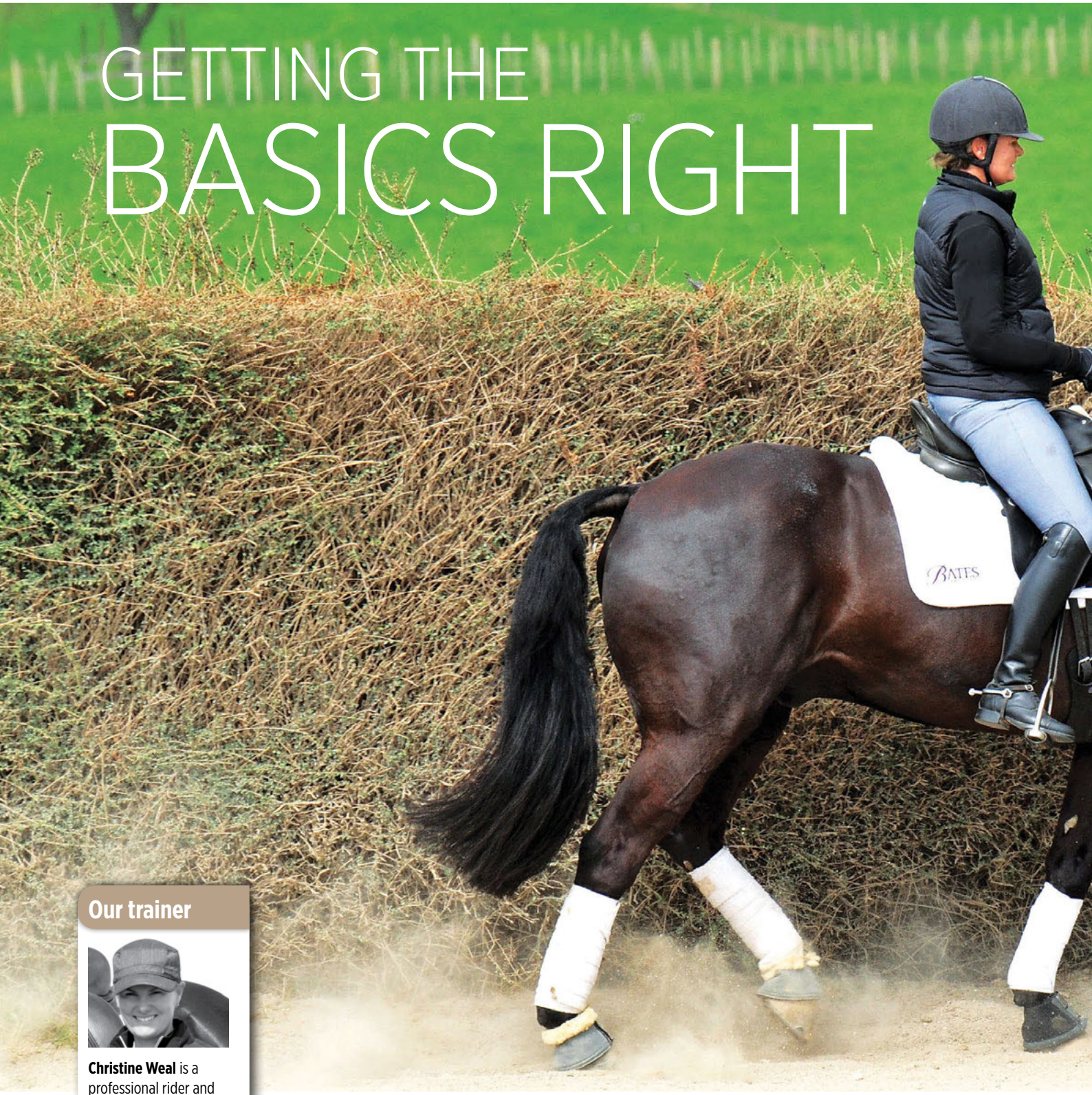
Next month

Increase your accuracy for top marks in the dressage arena and tidy jump-offs when showjumping.

★★★ Rate this issue

Go to tinyurl.com/RateApr15 for a chance to win a Mountain Horse Crew jacket (see p9).

GETTING THE BASICS RIGHT



Our trainer

Christine Weal is a professional rider and trainer based in New Zealand. She has ridden at Advanced level and trains many young horses starting out in their competitive careers. She has represented New Zealand several times, winning the Sydney CDI International Derby individual and team competition.

Photos: Ryan Teece



THE PERFECT RIDING SEAT: WHAT IS IT?

The perfect riding position is something that has been developed, refined and passed down through generations. One of the first things to realise is that the term 'seat' is a little misleading. As the Greek historian Xenophon rightly pointed out, the riding seat has nothing at all in common with sitting on a chair, but rather resembles standing upright with slightly straddled and bent knees. The following five points describe the ideal position and how to achieve it.

1

To begin with, check that you are sitting centrally in the deepest part of the saddle, with your hips square to your horse's hips and your weight evenly distributed across your seat bones. Make sure there is a vertical line running through your ear, shoulder, hip and heel.



As well as looking elegant and effortless, with aids that are invisible to the onlooker, adopting a correct position helps your horse perform to the best of his ability. Professional dressage rider and trainer Christine Weal explains how to get there...

The perfect position can transform the way your horse goes, but Christine Weal notices the same positional errors popping up time and time again when she is teaching riders.

"A really common error is not maintaining that all-important line through your arms and hands to your horse's mouth," says Christine. "Some riders don't realise that if they jut their elbows out just a little bit, it gives their horse an opportunity to escape the contact. Not using the leg enough and over-correcting are issues that crop up regularly, too. These are easy habits to slip into and they usually occur because the rider doesn't fully understand contact. However, these simple mistakes make it harder to keep your horse soft through his jaw and connected from front to back."

According to Christine, it is also important to acknowledge that a rider can be just as crooked and one-sided as their horse. She emphasises that, while it can be useful to focus on the trickier side, it is important not to go too far the other way because this can cause further imbalances.

"As far as your position goes, keep it simple. Try not to do too much. Remember, less is often more when it comes to horses. Avoid looking down, because it will bring you and your horse behind the movement and throw both of you out of balance. Equally, don't lean too far forward because your horse will follow you and fall onto his forehand," says Christine. "Concentrate on staying level."

Christine also points out that it is imperative you try to remain relaxed in the saddle – tensing up will cause your horse to tighten up through his body. If you are having trouble loosening up, check that you are breathing properly. Many riders become so focused and concerned with the task at hand that they forget to breathe. Your muscles automatically become tight when you hold your breath and this tension ripples through your entire body. Breathing out helps to relax cramped muscles.

2

While your body should remain upright and it's essential that you don't collapse at the waist, it's also really important to make sure that there's no tension running through your body. Your seat, thighs and knees should all be relaxed on the saddle, not tight or gripping.

3

To help you remain in balance with your horse and absorb his movement, shake off any stiffness through your shoulders, spine and hips – otherwise you're in for a bumpy ride and your horse will suffer discomfort through the sensitive areas of his body.

4

Make sure your lower leg rests lightly against your horse's sides, with your weight dropping down, unforced, into the ball of your foot, which should rest in the stirrup. Your heel should be slightly lower than your toe, your ankle supple and your toe pointing forward.

5

There shouldn't be any tension in your shoulders, which will allow your arms and elbows to hang loosely at your sides. Keep your fingers softly closed around the reins, with a straight line passing from your elbow, through your hand and along the rein to your horse's mouth.



If your horse becomes tense, walk on a long rein and allow him to relax for a minute, reward him with a pat, then gather your reins and perform the exercise again

Standing still

At the halt, your horse should stand attentive, engaged, motionless, straight and square with his weight evenly distributed over all four legs. He should maintain a light, soft contact with your hand and be ready to move off at the slightest indication. You should have contact with your leg and your horse should not be afraid to stand still.

By deepening your seat, you can achieve the impulsion required for the halt. This stimulates the horse's hindquarters to reach forward and underneath his body, thus accepting a greater load of weight and creating the balanced halt. This stimulation is the result of your leg pressure on both sides of your horse's body, encouraging your horse to lift his spine to meet your seat. Once halted, you should allow a slight relaxation of your upper body and, at the same time, advance the hands slightly to give the horse a period of relaxation. This relaxation is a vital part of the training process because without it, nervousness and restlessness will set in.

If your horse is not engaged correctly, isn't moving equally into the contact from both hindlegs, or isn't responding to your seat and leg, he won't halt square. A halt that is not square can also be the fault of the rider using one leg more than the other. It can also be the result of the horse trying to escape through an open aid – for example, open elbows, reins that aren't even, legs that are unevenly applied or uneven weight aids.

Practice makes perfect!

It's essential to understand how to correctly ride a downward transition. To begin with, make sure you are in a balanced position (see p29). Your reins must be short enough that you have an elastic connection with your horse's mouth and your arms out in front of you to create a straight line from your elbow to your horse's mouth. These prerequisites are imperative to the success of the downward transition. A correct halt requires your horse to be active behind from walk to halt, requiring only a soft contact. You should also get a sense that he would move forward immediately when asked, rather than using the halt as an excuse to shut down and collapse.

"I cannot stress enough, the importance of keeping both yourself and your horse straight," says Christine. Your horse's head needs to be positioned straight and in the middle of his chest. Keep your shoulders straight, look up, close your elbows and don't collapse in your sternum. Ride into a closed hand and, as your horse comes to the halt, soften with your hand. If your horse isn't moving into both reins, you'll feel an uneven contact. If he twists, the problem is generally in his hindquarters and you will need to correct this with your legs (if you are crooked or unbalanced, you will force your horse off balance).

When your horse halts square, you'll feel his weight evenly distributed under your seat bones. Leaning down to check will probably knock your horse off balance, so ask a friend to tell you when he is square or use a mirror.

Rein-back is also a very useful tool for training the halt. It will help to get him to respect your aids a bit more. It helps to perform the rein-back alongside a fence or wall so that you can more easily judge and correct the straightness.

Top tip
Any roughness or excessive action on the part of the rider will prevent a soft, fluid halt.

Essential tips

Leaning back doesn't equal impulsion

Many riders lean behind the vertical (especially in medium trot), because they think they're driving their horses more forward. However, the problem with leaning back is that you'll end up pushing your horse's back down.

So if you tend to lean back, here's a quick tip to give you some muscle memory for keeping your upper body straight. While you're standing on the ground, lean back and ask a friend to put the palm of her hand between your shoulder blades. Ask her to gently push your upper body forward until your shoulders are above your hips. Repeat this several times. Close your eyes as you're being pushed forward so you can really memorise the feeling of bringing your upper body over your hips.

Then, when you're riding your horse, pretend your friend is gently pushing your upper body forward to help you sit up straight.

Keep your pelvis in neutral

Riding, whatever your discipline, is all about balance. You need to be centred and balanced to keep your horse in good balance.

A great image to help you keep your pelvis in a neutral position in your quest for good balance is to imagine your pelvis is a big bucket filled with water. When your pelvis is in a neutral position, you can keep all the water in the bucket. If you ride with an arched, tense back, the top of your pelvis will tip forward and the water will spill out the front of the bucket. If you ride with a rounded lower back, the top of your pelvis will tip back and the water will spill out the back of the bucket. Help your horse find his balance by riding with a neutral pelvis and keeping all the water in the bucket!

Dealing with a hot horse

The first thing many riders do when they find themselves on a hot horse is take their leg off and pull up with their reins. This is actually one of the worst things you can do. Sit close to your horse, as this will give him confidence. Put your legs around him and feel the reins softly. You will almost feel him breathe a sigh of relief.





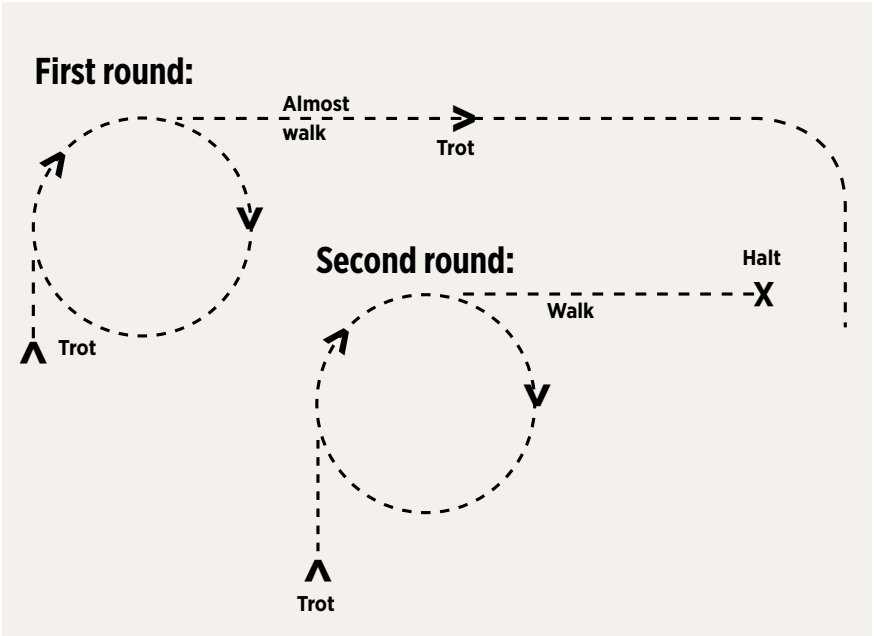




Establishing a square halt

To begin with, trot a straight line onto a 10-metre circle in the corner. As you ride out of the circle onto the long side, bring your horse back until he's almost walking for two strides. Then trot on again, pushing your horse through the contact. This encourages him to use his back end. When his shoulders are up and his quarters are engaged, the halt is more likely to be straight and balanced. On the next circuit, continue to trot and follow the same pattern, this time making a downwards transition to walk, then halting at B or E.

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A happy half-halt

The half-halt is the cornerstone of balance, engagement and preparation for a turn or transition. Begin thinking of it as a 'half-go', because every half-halt should contain surge, drive and energy from the hindquarters.

A half-halt is a three-step, three-second process. To the untrained eye, it appears that the rider applies three sets of aids at the same time. However, if you slow it down you would first see the rider's legs closing around the horse to create the drive from the back end, then just before the horse surges into the medium gait, the rider uses the inside rein to ask for bend and softness. Finally, the movement is finished using the outside rein, which asks for reduction of pace and works on lowering the head.

Within the three seconds, it is important that the rider's legs remain active on the horse's side. This keeps the energy coming through from behind into the hand. Half-halts encourage a soft outline: only when he is soft in your hand will he stop leaning or pulling.







Exercise one

Imagine that there are two circles. When your horse isn't collected, the circles are separated (top left). In the half-halt, your job is to close these circles together (centre left). When this happens, the front circle comes up through your legs, over your horse's wither, down the front of his face, under his forelegs and back up through the sole of your boot. The back circle comes up through your legs, over your horse's quarters, down under his hindlegs and back up through the sole of your boots.

Your horse's hindquarters rotate under him, driving him forward and his forehand rotates upwards, lightening his shoulders and giving his forelegs freedom to swing with extravagance and less effort. If both hindlegs step further forward under his centre, the increased flexion in his quarters means he can carry more weight, then propel his body powerfully forwards and upwards.

What you feel in your hand is a direct correlation to what the horse is doing with his hindlegs. If they are inactive, straggling behind his body and not supporting much of his weight, or only pushing with little engagement or carrying power, you will probably feel heaviness in your hands. In contrast, if his hindlegs are actively underneath his body, supporting a good portion of his weight, he will feel nice and light in your hands. So focus on getting those hindlegs active!

Essential tips

Learn on the lunge

Lessons on the lunge, preferably without stirrups, can be hugely beneficial and are certainly not something to be ashamed of. Many professional riders continue to have sessions on the lunge, even when they are at the top of their game. Having someone else in control of your horse grants you a rare opportunity to focus on yourself and correct any problem areas. Here are some exercises to try...

1. Jockey stirrups

Take your feet out of your stirrups and pull both knees up towards the pommel of the saddle. Imagine that your stirrups are getting shorter and shorter, until they are jockey length. In this position, you can feel the exact location of your pelvis and seat bones. Now stretch your leg back down, concentrating on keeping the deep contact with your seat bones. Repeat this exercise several times in walk.

2. Upper body rotations

Knot your reins and, holding your whip with both hands, raise your arms above your head. You should be forming a U position. Make sure that your hands are at exactly the same level. If one hand is higher than the other, it usually means there is a slight giving way in your upper body. Rotate to the right and left, ensuring your hands remain at the same height and the movement is executed smoothly and harmoniously. Start at walk and, when you feel confident, progress to trot or canter.

Watch and learn

Observe as many riders as possible to pinpoint who really swings supply through their hips, and who wobbles about with tense hips and no support in their waist. Who sits tall and in absolute harmony with their horse? Which riders look like they form one unit with their horse, with aids almost entirely invisible to the spectator? Watch the professionals out competing, paying particular attention to their balance, posture and how they move with their horse. Along with recruiting the services of an experienced trainer, this is one of the best ways of learning how to adopt the correct position.

As with all things that are worth waiting for, achieving a riding position to be proud of takes time. Remember that, with practice, your seat and balance will become easier and your horse's way of going will improve.



Ensure your horse is active in his hindquarters

Top tip
Once your horse responds, it's important to relax the contact as a reward.



Ride a few strides of walk



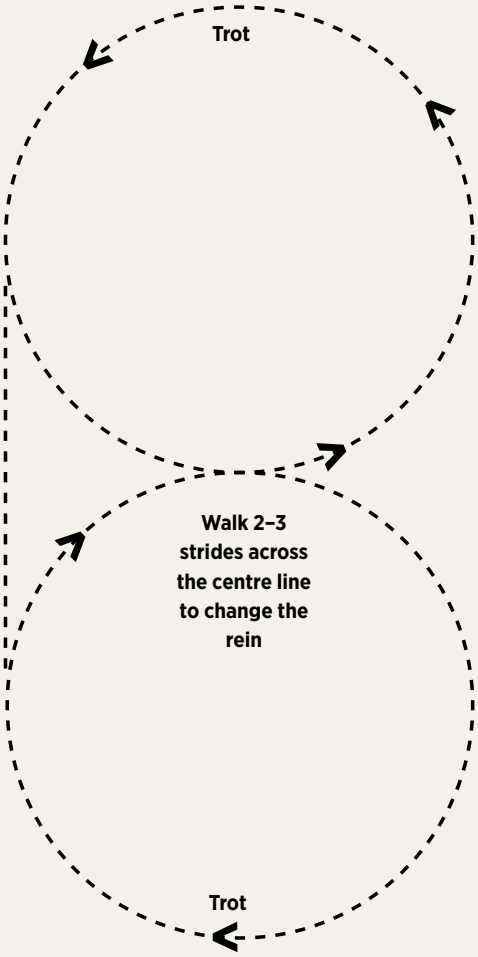
Make a smooth transition back to trot

Excercise two

Pick up trot on a 20-metre circle, then ride a half-halt as you cross the centre line. Deepen your seat and come back to walk for two or three strides – no more. Then immediately ride an upward transition to trot, while changing the rein onto a 20-metre circle on the other rein, using the half-halt to encourage your horse to wait in front, then asking for the trot. The key to riding this movement successfully is to make sure you keep your horse in front of your leg in the transition from trot to walk. By riding forward from your seat and leg into your hand in the half-halt, you encourage your horse's hindquarters to be active while moving into the walk.

You will know you have been successful in keeping the hindquarters active when your horse easily and smoothly steps back into trot after the few strides of walk.

Don't repeat the exercise too much – sometimes stay on the circle and don't change the rein. This will help to ensure your horse is listening instead of anticipating what you are going to ask for.



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Warm-up etiquette

Are you heading to your first show or just feeling a bit ring-rusty? Getting things right in the warm-up is the first step on the road to a rosette. Horse&Rider *shows you how*

We all know how annoying it is when there are too many people in the warm-up arena. Help reduce bottlenecks by sorting out all your tack and equipment before you enter the warm-up, and if you want to stand for a while, avoid doing so in the arena – instead, find a quiet spot out of the way.



If you stop to check tack or the running order, look around before moving off, and check before making sudden changes of rein to avoid collisions with other riders.

Staying attentive may seem obvious, but many accidents in the warm-up arena are caused by riders not paying attention to what's going on around them.

Avoid crossing the approach or landing of a fence without checking for anyone intending to jump.

If the collecting ring is really busy, it's a good idea to call out which practice fence you are approaching. This helps other competitors know your intentions and stay out of your way.

Tail ribbons are essential if you have an inexperienced horse or one who may kick. Young or inexperienced horses should wear a green ribbon in their tail. Horses who are known to kick, or who you think may kick, should wear a red ribbon in their tail. A ribbon in your horse's tail does not guarantee other riders will give you more space, and it is still your responsibility to stay alert and avoid putting your horse in a situation where he may kick out or react badly.

Always give way to people going at a faster gait – essentially this means never walking or halting on the track. Remember that riders doing lateral work also have priority over the outside track.



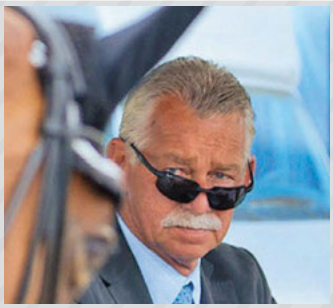
Always pass left to left when meeting a rider coming the other way – with the exception of if you are walking. This means that you avoid the possibility of a collision, which will cause stress to your horse – as well as the person you collide with! Make sure you leave space when passing other riders in case either horse kicks or is nervous.

Hot stuff

Excitable horses may not be the easiest to ride, but find the key to keeping them happy and focused and the sky's the limit! Horse&Rider *gets tips from the experts to encourage your fizzy horse to focus...*

Riding a hot horse can seem quite intimidating, especially if you're not used so much power and forward motion. But speak to the top riders and many will tell you that if you can harness an excitable horse's energy to work with you, the reward can be huge. The question is, how?

Horse&Rider listened in at the Dressage Convention 2014 to find out how top-class riders and trainers work with hot horses to get great results.



Stephen Clarke

Stephen is the most senior and well-respected dressage judge in the world today. He was President of the Ground Jury at the London 2012 Olympic Games.



Lead the conversation

Sometimes you'll find that when you begin more advanced work with your horse, he'll find it hard and get annoyed with you. It can be tempting to back off when this happens, but don't do it!

As your horse begins to move up the scales of training, he must remember that work is on your terms and he needs to do what you ask. Be completely consistent – don't let him lead the conversation.



Florian Bacher

One of the Spanish Riding School of Vienna's most revered riders, Florian trains and rides the school's Lipizzaner stallions. He also trains dressage students throughout Europe and competes at FEI level.



Stretch it out

Hot horses can be prone to rushing. However, it's essential that you don't let your horse control the tempo. If he begins to run then stop and ask for a few steps of rein-back, then ask him to walk forward. Repeat a few times until he begins to pay attention to you. You must be in total control.

It's really important to give your horse regular breaks and reward him with a stretch. But keep the same criteria for what's acceptable – don't allow him to rush off. Use your seat to steady the tempo and encourage your horse to stretch as much as possible. Bend him to the inside and then relax the hand to encourage the stretch.

Words: Louise Kittle. Photos: Kevin Sparrow



Supporting self-carriage

Self-carriage is a basic requirement for dressage, but very few people can ride a whole test with the horse entirely in self-carriage. It's extremely hard to do. When you lose self-carriage, your horse becomes tense and strong, you hold on to him and then he becomes shorter and tighter. A shorter, tighter, higher neck is a normal response for a horse who is in a stressful or tense environment. Learn what it means and learn how to unpick the problem for your individual horse.



Carl Hester MBE

Carl is a British team stalwart. He won a gold and two silver medals at the 2011 European Championships, as well as team gold at the London 2012 Olympics and team silver at the 2014 World Equestrian Games.



Top tip

Sitting over your knee helps to loosen your horse through his back.

Leg and hand

If you have a hot horse, there is temptation is to take your leg off. But this is a fatal mistake. No matter how hot the horse, you must keep your leg on. Using half-pass and leg-yield will help to encourage your horse to be softer in his neck. If a horse is tense, it's common to feel it in his neck as well as his back.

It's really important that horses learn to accept contact, even if they're excitable or fizzy. It's important that your horse is okay with you picking up the rein – many riders on hot horses will slowly pick up the rein, hoping the horse doesn't notice they're there. But this 'gentle' riding really doesn't help – at some point you will have to pick up the rein, your horse won't be used to it and will shoot off away from the contact.



Richard Davison

Richard has ridden at four Olympic games, and was Team Captain and Performance Manager when Team GB won its first European gold and World silver medals, and went on to become Olympic Champions.



Down the line

Hot horses can be reluctant to halt on the centre line. If this sounds like your horse, don't despair. Come down the centre line, then ride a 10-metre circle to the left or right. As you come back onto the centre line, ask for halt. If you don't get an immediate response, keep going and ride a circle the other way. This helps to keep his energy focused.

It's also important that your horse gets used to being moved in halt and not being left alone. Too many people take their leg off and stop 'being there' for their horse when the halt is established, which is a bad idea. Instead, slip the rein a litttle when your horse halts, but keep your leg on. Be consistent with this and you'll find your horse will learn to chill out and relax, rather than seeing it as a stressful or anxiety-inducing thing.

Case study:

Nip Tuck, aka Barney

Nip Tuck rose to fame as Carl Hester's equine partner at the 2014 World Equestrian Games in Normandy. And while many dressage horses could be considered 'highly strung', Barney, as he is known at home, takes it to a whole new level!

Carl explains: "With Barney, it's a major job to achieve anything without tension. For example, at a competition on the morning of the Kur, all the horses are shattered and having a rest after the Grand Prix Special the day before, but Barney is out in the arena doing lots of trotting and cantering around in his snaffle to work off some fizz.

"And he needs careful management at home, too. He lives out at home and needs lots of walk work, hacks and time to relax to stop him getting fitter. It can be tempting to work a hot horse a lot to tire him out, but then you just get him fitter and that doesn't really help the situation. That's certainly the case with Barney.

"The hotter he gets, the more I try to keep my leg on. He really wants to do his job, but actually that presents its own problem because he sets off by himself and doesn't wait for me."



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Photo credit: Sebastian Oakley Photography

PART TWO *In this feature…* ➤ **Jump corners smoothly and easily**

Izzy Taylor's Cross-country secrets



Our trainer

Izzy Taylor is the latest in an eventing dynasty. Her grandmother was placed at Badminton, her mother rode for Britain at Young Rider level and her aunt won the first-ever Burghley horse trials. But Izzy's success speaks for itself – she rode as an individual for Team GB at the 2013 European Championships and was selected for the British squad at the 2014 World Championships before her mount, Allercombe Ellie, picked up a minor injury in training. Izzy's season finished in amazing style, with a 7th place at Burghley and overall 5th in the 2014 British Eventing rankings.

Our models

Cara Williams rides eight-year-old **Paddy**, a 16.2hh Irish Thoroughbred. Cara bought Paddy as a five-year-old and has competed him up to BE100. She hopes to take him up to Novice level. After taking some time out after injury, they are now working on rebuilding their confidence over fences and, in turn, creating a better rhythm into and away from jumps.

As told to Jo Thoenes. Photos: Trevor Meeks. With thanks to Izzy Taylor for her help with this feature, teamtayloreventing.com

Rebalance a strong horse ➤ Focus his attention ➤ Develop confidence together



With a reputation as one of the UK's most stylish cross-country riders, Izzy Taylor has made her mark on the eventing scene. Follow her as she shows Horse&Rider *the exercises she uses at home to ensure competition success*

I take all my horses cross-country schooling early in the spring season to allow them to get their eye in. And the training doesn't end there – especially for the youngsters, who continue to go out and about schooling between competitions throughout the year. There really is no substitute for getting out and practising over solid obstacles, but between those cross-country schooling sessions, there are ways to fine-tune elements of your cross-country technique at home in the school. This includes ways to improve your approach to fences and your accuracy over them, as well as establishing good pace and tempo between jumps, which will improve your performance.



Start right

Always begin with a warm-up that focuses on ensuring your horse is listening to your aids and moving forward from your leg into a strong, forward canter. Even though you're in the arena, it's important that you have a cross-country mindset. Out on a course, you will need to ride with a more attacking style than in the arena, so get into the zone by shortening your stirrups to the length you would ride at cross-country, come up into a light seat and check that your canter has plenty of impulsion to take you to the fence.

Practise lengthening and shortening your horse's canter stride between markers in the school. You're aiming for good adjustability in his canter without it affecting his tempo or rhythm. The more responsive your horse is, the less time you will waste setting up in front of a jump or bringing him back to the canter you need to jump a skinny fence after a long gallop. If you don't work on this adjustability and responsiveness at home, you simply won't be able to do it out on the course.

Successful cross-country riding is also about economy. Wasting time and energy between fences will have a big impact on your round, and when riding longer and more taxing courses, having enough fuel in both your own and your horse's tank will be a deciding factor in whether you will have sufficient stamina to help your horse make the distance.

Build it up

Being confident in your partnership with your horse is essential. It's important that he feels you are committed to the fence, because if he senses otherwise then he may lose confidence on the approach and be reluctant to jump. You can create this feeling of support with a sensitive, consistent rein contact and by having your leg close to his side at all times. It's no good only riding him positively like this towards a fence – you need to make this your normal way of riding so that he learns to trust you.

While positive riding is an important part of your approach to a fence, that's not the only thing to consider. The getaway is also important, because it forms part of your approach to the next fence. If your horse is prone to shooting off on landing, it's important that you're ready for him. Focus on getting him back into a steady rhythm as quickly as possible – this will help to get his attention back on the job at hand. The advantage of cross-country practice in the arena is that there is less space for your horse to shoot off after the fence, so to some extent he is forced to listen as you make decisions about turns and fences on related strides.

Even though you're in the arena, it's important that you have a cross-country mindset





Being in harmony with your horse will give him the confidence to perform well for you



Concentrate on a balanced turn to the fence

Izzy's top tip

➤ If I'm taking a youngster cross-country schooling for the first time, I always take an assortment of bits with me so that I can experiment on the day. If the horse isn't happy with one, or isn't accepting the bridle in it, I'll see if a change in bitting helps the situation. I don't worry about stopping and starting – it's better to find a solution on the day than having to wait for our next outing.



Paddy's confidence is growing



"Keep your leg close at all times," says Izzy

Stride it out

A rule of thumb when measuring out distances is 12ft/4m to one canter stride. But not every horse has a 'standard' canter stride, so if your horse is struggling with the distance and finding it too long or too short, be prepared to adjust it to make him comfortable.

If you are keeping the fences quite small, you won't need so much space between them – but the bigger the jumps, the more likely your horse is to need a full-sized canter stride.

Jump to it

Warm up over a simple cross-pole that you can approach from both reins in trot and then canter. Make sure your approach is straight and balanced, and consider your landing and getaway from the fence as you are riding into it.

It's important to work on both reins so your horse doesn't anticipate which way he is going to turn and use that as an excuse to run through the bridle. By keeping his attention focused on the job at hand, you will feel more confident, too, which makes riding positively much easier.

Initially, land on the rein you have approached the fence on, working equally from both directions. Help your horse to land on the correct lead by maintaining a little inside bend and looking in the direction you want him to go. Next, start changing your landing direction in the air. The aids are the same as when you were staying on the same rein, except that this time you need to slightly move your weight and change the bend as your horse jumps. Look to where you want to go and open the corresponding rein to encourage him to land on the other lead. Your position on landing is extra-important here – check you're not collapsing on landing because this will cause your horse to drop onto his forehand, sprawl and lose balance.

Izzy's top tip

➤ While you can't use it at a competition, I often use a longer schooling whip for cross-country practice to ensure the horse respects my leg and moves off my aids.

Moving up a gear

Once you can approach the cross-pole from either rein and choose the canter lead you want on landing, it's time to make things a bit more complicated. Add two more jumps to your warm-up fence (see diagram, p47). Depending on how much space you have in your arena, place the extra jumps four or five strides beyond your first fence to create a dog-leg to the left and right. This exercise is great for honing your cross-country technique, because it allows you to try out different lines and approaches, while keeping the bigger canter you've developed. Before you start incorporating the fences into exercises, pop over them individually on both reins.

Because the fences are close together and there is a lot for your horse to look at, it's even more important that you have his full attention. Use half-halts and transitions to ensure he is listening to you, all the while maintaining a positive, controlled canter.

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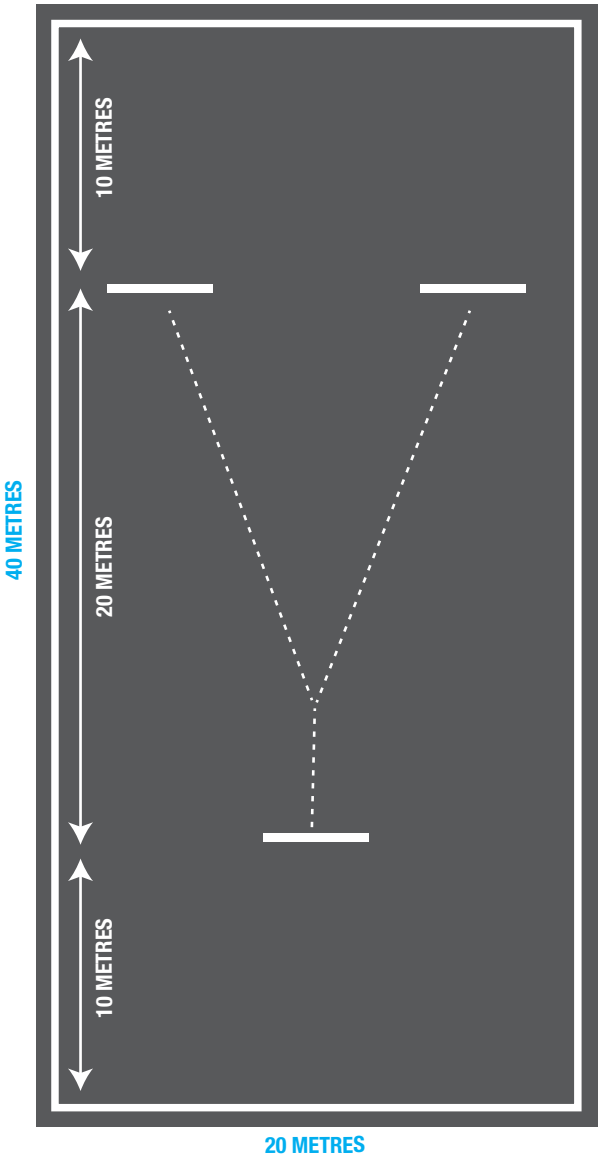


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Look towards the next fence on landing

Stop right now

If your horse is strong on landing from a fence, don't ignore his behaviour. When he evades you by shooting off after a jump, it can play on your mind on the approach, and even make you start riding backwards into the fence in anticipation of losing control after it.

Teaching your horse to get back into a good rhythm as quickly as possible after the fence is very important. Running away after the fence may not seem like a problem, but if he does it in a combination, he could soon get you – and him – into real trouble. Train away this behaviour by following my simple steps...

➤ The first few times you jump the fence, ask your horse to stop in a straight line within a few strides of landing. Don't allow him to stop at an angle – be firm that the halt must be perpendicular to the fence.

➤ Once he has halted, reward him with a pat for listening to you.

➤ Move off in canter, alternating the canter lead you ask for.

➤ Once your horse accepts the transitions, you can begin to maintain canter on landing, always ensuring you re-establish your canter rhythm as soon as possible.

➤ If he begins to ignore you again, go straight back to halting after the fence. He will soon learn that shooting forward after the jump is not an acceptable response.

➤ Be quick to reward him when he does as you ask. A pat or a wither scratch will let him know you're pleased.


Reward your horse when he responds in the way you want

Jumping corners

Cross-country riding requires accuracy, and the course builder will test just how accurate you and your horse are by setting technical questions with narrow fences that invite your horse to run past them. Few fences need more precision riding than corners and the good news is that you can easily create one at home. As your confidence grows, you can make the question harder by increasing the angle of the corner.

I use two upright wings for the wide side of the corner and a barrel or block for the narrow side. Some people will use a wing on the narrow side of the fence, but this creates a rather easier question because the wing acts as a guide and 'holds' you in over the fence. By using a low block, it's only your accuracy that is controlling the jump. Before you head out onto the cross-country course, you need to know that it's your accurate riding that gets you to the right point of take-off.

It's important to meet the front rail on an angle. If you or your horse aren't experienced with jumping corners, begin with a simple upright and jump it on an angle. The only difference when you progress to jumping a corner will be that you will be straight and the rail will be at an angle, rather than the other way around!

Izzy's top tip

➤ If you use a different bit for jumping, then use it for arena cross-country practice. However, if your horse wears a different bit for cross-country than for other disciplines, stay in your day-to-day bit. Even though it's cross-country practice, to your horse these exercises are a lot like showjumping! Also, the arena is a good place to practice getting your horse to be responsive in the softer mouthpiece.



Upping the impulsion

A common mistake riders make when approaching a narrow fence is to confuse a slow approach with increased accuracy. Actually, this can lead to a loss of impulsion, giving the horse time to waiver on his line and making it harder for him to jump the fence at the exact point you want him to – or indeed to jump it at all!



Cara and Paddy sail the corner in style



Ride a positive turn on the approach to the jump

Next up, you need to decide where to jump the corner. This really depends on how wide it is – but as a guide, you want to jump as close to the point of the corner as possible without making a run-out too likely. If you jump too far to the wide side of the fence, your horse may find the width of the corner a problem. Wherever you have chosen to jump the corner, as you begin your turn towards the fence, sit up and look at the part of the fence that you want to jump. Then ride positively and straight towards that point. You may find it easier to keep your horse straight into the fence by setting your hands slightly wider apart than normal and using your legs to funnel your horse between your hands. Remember to keep looking up and beyond the fence to where you want to land.

The good news is that jumping narrow fences is much like jumping a corner – they both demand accuracy and a balanced approach. So once you've mastered corners, skinnies should come quite easily! Nevertheless, it's important to practice skinnies at home – try riding them with a straight approach, on related strides from other fences or even by jumping on the turn.

Web extra

Go online to find out Izzy's advice for lateral work, and get the inside track on her training with Charlotte Dujardin. **horseandrideruk.com**

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➤ **Teach him good basics** ➤ **Help him to relax when tied up**



MANNERS MATTER

Jason Webb shows you simple solutions to create a horse who's polite to handle from the ground

If your horse refuses to stand, squirms around when you're tacking up or tries to barge past you when you're leading him, it can be a real nuisance. Ground manners are something horses should learn from a young age, but not all do. Good groundwork can go a long way to establishing you as the leader and instilling trust in your horse.

Why does he fidget?

We've all seen it before – horses who refuse to stand still when tied up. Some panic, while others paw the ground or fidget. For some owners, rude equine behaviour can knock their confidence. Understanding why your horse acts up is the key to resolving the problem.

Horses are bargey and fidgety because they either want to get away from their handler or they want to be somewhere else. This is usually due to distractions such as feeding time or a mate going out in the field. It's the herd instinct that makes him want to be where his friends are.

Horses can also develop bargey or fidgety behaviour because they don't feel at ease around their handler. Nagging – an issue I described as potentially leading to a nappy horse (Spring 2015, p43) – can also lead to bargey or fidgety behaviour. Constantly asking your horse to do something, without getting the desired response or holding onto him, can lead your horse to become disrespectful towards you.

Change your ways

To change a fidgety horse's behaviour, you need to start by changing your own. A good place to start is by gaining your horse's attention. When he tunes you out, motivate him to move by directing energy at his hindquarters and be prepared to twirl your rope or even bump him with your hand to get him to move far enough away that he ends up looking at you. If your horse is likely to kick, use a longer rope or crop to project energy from a safe distance. Move him until he's looking at you, giving you his full attention. Keep repeating this if your horse continues to walk through you or away from you. This method will keep your horse looking at you, meaning he won't be able to bump into you or barge past you.

Gaining your horse's respect is about him moving when you ask him to. He must respond to your cues, otherwise you will be seen as inconsistent and he will become frustrated or ignore you. Horses who do things in their own time may trust you, but when asked to try, usually look for a way out and this is why he will be good most of the time, but not always.

Gaining your horse's respect is about him moving for you when you want him to

Our expert



Jason Webb was born in New South Wales, Australia. Through his continual work in training horses, he gained an in-depth understanding of horse psychology and behaviour, and has developed a training system based on equine psychology. His easy to understand teaching methods have helped riders of all abilities train their horses in a safer, more effective way.

Our equine pupils



Daisy is a three-year-old cob who has come to Jason for starting under saddle.



Cali is a six-year-old Spanish gelding. He is rebuilding his trust in people after a bad experience.



Smokey is a two-year-old Thoroughbred colt who has come to Jason for starting under saddle before a career in racing.

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Disengage his hind end

Being able to move your horse where and when you want is the key to respect. Disengaging his hind end is not only a good way of diffusing a tense situation in the ridden horse, it's also a good groundwork exercise to help you gain your horse's respect.

For a full description of how to do this, see February 2015, p44. On the ground, use the lead rope or reins to flex your horse's head towards you, and direct your energy towards his hind end. He should move his hindquarters away from you, but if he doesn't, you may need to ask with a stronger aid, swinging at or even tapping his hindquarters with the rope. As soon as he responds, release the tension and tell your horse that he's a good boy.

Repeating this exercise will make your horse tune in to you and you'll gain his respect as his leader, so keep practising it regularly.



He should move his hindquarters away from you



Your horse should stand still while being tacked up



Teaching your horse to stand still can come in handy

Good basics

When you're teaching a young horse the basics – standing for the farrier, having a rug put on and standing while being tacked up – it's important to get it right from the start. Establishing good basics means that your horse will trust and respect you. This is achieved through groundwork and involves getting your horse to pay attention to you. If he doesn't, he'll tend to walk away or through you. A bargey horse wants to get near you to influence you to go in the direction he wants to go in, so keeping him out of your space is essential to maintain control and instil patience in your horse.

Once you've mastered disengaging his hind end, you're ready to take it a step further. Do this by moving away from your horse, making sure he doesn't follow. If he does follow you, get him to step back to where he was asked to wait, or move his back end until he faces you again. Teaching him to stand still without constant reinforcement can come in handy out and about, as well as on the yard. But instilling this into your horse will take calm, consistent and decisive repetition. It's not a quick lesson – teaching your horse good manners will take time.



Stop fidgeting behaviour by asking him to move away

HOW TO...

Stop the fidget

A simple but effective way to help eradicate fidgeting is teaching your horse to stand still while tied up. When teaching horses to stand tied up, I like to use the safe-tie (right). It offers varying levels of resistance, depending on how the rope is threaded through. The better your horse understands tying up, the more you can increase the resistance. This will stop him from realising he can inch the rope through. And once your horse knows not to pull back, you can teach him to stand still, rather than fidget.

To start, move your horse away from you while he's tied up, so that he's standing parallel to the fence. Once he's moved, pause. This lets him know that this is a good place to stand.

Walk behind your horse, keeping a safe distance, and touch the fence or wall on the other side. If he moves before you reach the fence, walk back to the other side and insist he moves back to where you originally placed him. You and your horse can have this conversation, going back and forth for what may seem like a long time, but he'll soon learn that the easiest thing to do is to stand where you ask while you move around him. Do this routine whenever your horse is tied up and starting to fidget. Remember to stand out of harm's way before asking your horse to move back to where you would like him.

Moving your horse may require different amounts of energy, from using a voice command to giving him a few bumps with a rope or crop. It's important that if you go to the trouble of asking him to move that he responds. You're only asking for a couple of steps, but they'll go a long way to changing your horse's attitude toward you for the better, which will in turn reduce the fidgeting until it disappears.

This takes leadership from you and trust from your horse. Work with him daily to improve his behaviour, but remember that these things take time. Soon he'll learn to mind his manners!



Tied up

Some horses can feel claustrophobic when tied up, getting into the bad habit of pulling back and breaking tie rings, headcollars or leads to get loose. My go-to tool for tying up fidgety or bargey horses is the safe-tie and clip.

The clip attaches to a tie-ring and I thread the lead rope through the safe-tie. The benefit of using the safe-tie is that when the horse pulls back, the rope gives some resistance, but allows the rope to thread through slowly. It's enough work for the horse that eventually he'll give up pulling back.

I like to use a 12ft rope for horses who tie up well and a 20ft rope for horses who are learning to tie up. Always supervise your horse when you tie him up.



Smokey tests the safe-tie while Jason watches on

★★★ Rate this issue

Go to tinyurl.com/RateApr15 for a chance to win a Mountain Horse Crew jacket (see p9).

Spring laminitis



Laminitis is mostly commonly associated with spring time and the new growth of grass. Recent research has shown that 90% of laminitis cases are the result of an underlying hormone condition. Unless one of these conditions is present, it is highly unlikely that, on its own, excessive grass intake can cause laminitis.

The two hormone conditions that horses with laminitis will usually be suffering from are Cushing's disease (PPID) and Equine Metabolic Syndrome (EMS). Both of these diseases can easily be diagnosed by a blood test and having your horse or pony tested can be extremely beneficial when it comes to diagnosing the cause of a laminitic episode and preventing future occurrences. Laminitis has the potential to cause devastating, irreparable damage to the feet, even before any clinical symptoms are present. This is why early diagnosis is paramount.

Horses and ponies that are predisposed to having an attack of laminitis need to be carefully managed, especially where diet is involved. A laminitic attack may be caused by numerous factors that can include trauma, concussion, sequel to infection or excessive intake of grass or hard feed. Laminitis-prone horses and ponies will require a controlled diet, which may include restricted grazing with the use of a muzzle and longer periods being stabled. Horses and ponies that are susceptible to this crippling disease must never be starved because this can result in hyperlipaemia, where stored fats are released into the bloodstream and can cause organ failure. However, it is vitally important that these horses and ponies still receive plenty of fibre, which can be soaked to reduce the calorie content along with a balanced diet. Blue Chip Lami-light is a low calorie, low sugar, low starch, diet feed balancer that provides all the essential vitamins, minerals and nutrients without encouraging any unwanted weight gain.

Lami-light is whole-cereal and molasses free and contains a complete hoof and respiratory formula. Laminitis-prone horses or ponies often have poor hoof quality, which is why feeding a complete hoof supplement that includes biotin, methionine and zinc can play an essential role in the recovery and continual health of the hoof. Blue Chip balancers are the first feed balancers that contain nucleotides. Nucleotides are the building blocks of DNA and RNA and are especially beneficial to laminitics because they aid the repair of the laminae, which are often damaged by laminitis attacks. Nucleotides also help to aid nutrient absorption, which is beneficial to horses or ponies on a restricted diet. Vitamin E is a powerful antioxidant and the cells' first line of defence, again especially beneficial to horses or ponies with laminitis. Blue Chip contains a natural, fruit-derived form of Vitamin E, which is 4–6 times more bioavailable than the synthetic form used in most other feeds. This will help remove toxins that are released during a laminitis attack.

Careful management and a diet that includes Blue Chip Lami-light and plenty of fibre will help to keep laminitis-prone horses and ponies in the best possible health.



To find out more on Blue Chip Lami-light visit bluechipfeed.com or call 0114 266 6200

Testimonial

I have a 15.1hh Welsh Section D mare, Emma, who gains weight easily. I wanted a feed that was low in calories but that had all the necessary vitamins and minerals she needs without an added supplement and I was recommended Clue Chip Lami-light. Since I started using it approximately 12 months ago, Emma has a lovely, glossy coat, maintains a healthy weight and overall looks well in herself. Because of Lami-light I have not had to use any added supplements and her movement is much better. Thank you, Blue Chip, I will never use anything else. Here is a picture of Emma being ridden by my daughter, Lauryn.

Lynsey Oliver



Our experts



Wendy Jago (left) is a British Dressage List 3 judge. She is also a neuro-linguistic programming (NLP) master practitioner and NLP coach.

Tania Grantham BHSAI Int SM (right) is a professional dressage rider who, as well as competing, specialises in helping all types of horse and rider enjoy dressage, making it fun, rewarding and attainable for everyone.

Together they run Make a Difference clinics, which include a session off-horse with Wendy followed by a session on-horse with Tania. Many riders keep their horse lives separate from their non-horse ones, but the clinic is designed to help riders explore what kind of approaches and strengths they could bring from their off-horse life to help improve their riding life.

Our rider



Victoria Pope rides her 16hh, 19-year-old ex-racehorse, Bumble. Together they compete in dressage at Medium level. Victoria has encountered a few problems as Bumble can be quite sharp and tense, resulting in Victoria becoming tense and sometimes getting cross with him through her frustration.

Riding – it's all in the mind!

The key to dressage is a relaxed horse and rider. But achieving this is easier said than done when you and your horse end up in a vicious circle of making each other feel increasingly tense. This month, Tania and Wendy take a look at how to break this cycle and transform your riding



You know you can do it. And you know your horse can do it – if only he would just settle down, relax and concentrate on the job in hand. But for some horses, chilling out is not in their nature and they find themselves becoming easily worked up or distracted. Having tried everything you can think of to get him to settle down and produce the lovely work you know he is capable of, to no avail, frustration is bound to finally set in. But, as Victoria discovered, becoming tense, irritated and cross only makes things worse.

Victoria's issues



Victoria has already had a couple of sessions with Tania and Wendy, because she found she was having some problems when she moved up to Elementary level and the judges were less forgiving. Bumble is a typical Thoroughbred, and can be sharp and quite tense. This in turn made Victoria feel tense and it was really affecting their marks.

But the problems weren't restricted to the competition arena. Victoria works full-time, commuting to London, and generally has a busy life, so she often rides Bumble at 6.30 in the morning when she is under strict time constraints. If he was feeling fresh and wasn't listening, Victoria found herself becoming cross and frustrated, which just made Bumble even more difficult to ride.

Having talked through the psychological side of things with Wendy, Victoria took what she'd learnt into her on-horse session with Tania.

As told to Lucy Turner. Photos: Bob Atkins. For more information on Make a Difference clinics, email inspiredressage@icloud.com

dressage test down into bite-sized chunks ➤ The importance of good preparation





Settling down to work

One of the things that Victoria has found really helped with Bumble's mindset is a set warm-up routine, which focuses on getting him stretched and relaxed. Tania explained: "Bumble's an older horse and he's done a lot in the past, having been raced, so he needs exercises to really loosen up those muscles, but in a way that gets him in the right mindset to work. When Victoria can get him working on a long rein without pressure so he really is relaxing and he's offering to stay there, then he's ready to get on with some work.

"We always start with canter as that's the pace Bumble's more comfortable in and then we progress to the trot work," said Tania. "It's kind of the unwritten rule that you start in walk, then progress to trot and then canter. But so many horses are bred for their canter these days that they often find the canter easier. So long as you don't start in a collected canter and you give your horse time to loosen up properly, I think it's more important that he starts off in his comfort zone."

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Ease the tension

One of Victoria's issues was that when Bumble got tricky in any way, she tended to grab for the rein contact. Being an ex-racehorse, Bumble understands picking up the contact as a cue to go faster, so Victoria's reaction to his behaviour caused further problems. This caused a vicious circle of anxiety and tension, leading to tension in Bumble that made him more difficult to deal with.

"I've learnt to calm down and ride with my mind a bit more," said Victoria. "He's quite wound up today because he's at a new venue and a year ago I'd have been getting quite cross with him. But getting cross didn't help and he'd always win the argument. Now things are much calmer, and he's much easier to ride and much more willing."

Tania explained more about the causes of Victoria's frustration and how she overcame it: "Victoria would become frustrated when things didn't go to plan. To my mind there were two main causes...

1 Fear

Bumble is an ex-racehorse who can be very sharp. Sometimes his spooking caused Victoria to be nervous.

2 Frustration at herself

As with a lot of riders, Victoria is a perfectionist. If she felt that they weren't performing a movement as well as they could, she would become frustrated.

"Both of the reasons above caused Victoria to become tense, both mentally and physically," Tania continued. "Mentally she would start to focus on the negative and physically she would tense her back, which in turn would tense her legs and arms. This meant she was less secure if Bumble did spook, and her aids became clumsy and a little jerky. This all resulted in Bumble becoming more tense and tight.

"First, Wendy and I helped Victoria to understand what was actually happening," said Tania. "Then we helped her to stay focused, or refocus herself, so she could then refocus Bumble. Physically we have worked a lot on Victoria's position, and the pressure and timing of her aids. Often something as simple as taking a deep breath or making a yield on the rein, coupled with patting Bumble's neck, will make all the difference. This sort of thing relaxed them both and allowed them to start again when things went wrong.

"We also helped Victoria to manage her expectations – for example, although it is good to want to ride at your very best every time, it is not always possible. On a very windy day, Bumble is likely to be spookier, so Victoria now starts with a slightly different routine to try to help him stay focused, and she carefully picks what exercises to do on that day – simple changes might be more appropriate than medium canter! This also works in relation to Victoria. If she has been travelling a lot for work and is jet-lagged, it is far more sensible to go for a hack or plan a rest day than to try to compete."

No need for speed

Victoria explained that when she was in the arena at a competition, she used to just ride the test as quickly as possible: "I've had to learn to slow the test down and break it down into separate movements – I've realised you don't get any marks for speed in dressage!" Victoria laughed.

Tania explained how this works: "Breaking the test down helps both horse and rider, as they have several manageable chunks of information to work with rather than one long stream. Often riding a test can feel a bit like being in a runaway car – the rider just survives the test rather than riding it, which is the situation Victoria found herself in.

"If you manage to break up the test, you can often find gaps of 'free time' in which you can catch your breath, rebalance and reorganise," Tania continued. "At Prelim level, for example, you often have a canter transition in a corner, then another corner and half a long side where you can 'breathe', before you need to do a circle. At higher levels it is often just one or two corners where you get a bit of breathing space. If ridden properly, this allows more than enough time to rebalance your horse and set him up for the next movement."

It sounds simple, but how do you go about it? "The best way to break up a test is to write it out," said Tania. "In one colour, write out the actual test – for example, at A enter in working trot. In another colour, write out notes for yourself – for example, balance the trot for the turn, ride forward and look up down the centre line. This way it'll help you find the gaps you need and you can learn the test with your notes overlaid."

> *If you manage to break up the test, you can often find gaps of 'free time' in which you can catch your breath*

Learn to move on



Because Bumble is sharp and easily distracted, it's not unusual for a blip to occur during a test (pictured below). Victoria then finds that any issues they have in the test break her concentration and impact on the movements that follow.

Victoria knows what she needs to do: "If he's a bit silly, I need to deal with it and put it behind me as soon as possible, and not let it affect the whole test. This is something I've not been able to do before. I know it's only one movement that's messed up and if I get myself organised we can still get good marks for the rest of the test, but it's easy to say and not so easy to put it into practice!"

Tania had some more advice for Victoria: "A major part of the process is recognising there is a problem, then categorising it. For example, is it an external influence (something he finds spooky) or is it a tricky movement? This will help you learn from problems and take steps to prevent them occurring in the future.

"If it's an external influence, learning what spooks him will enable you to prepare for riding near potentially spooky things in the future and perhaps you can do some desensitising at home, if appropriate. If it's a tricky movement that's causing the problem, have a think about what you can do to support and help Bumble with it. Remember, if things do go wrong during a test, forget about it for the time being and keep riding!"



Bumble suddenly shoots forward



Victoria's goals

- Settle Bumble during the warm-up so he is in the right frame of mind before starting work.
- Break the vicious cycle of anxiety and tension by doing her best to keep calm and relaxed, even when Bumble is being difficult.
- Manage her expectations and realise it's not possible to ride perfectly every time. If it's windy or she's tired, set simpler, more achievable goals.
- Slow the test down and break it up into more manageable, bite-sized pieces. This will also help her to find 'breathing spaces' in the test.
- Try not to lose concentration if things go wrong during a test. Quickly put them behind her and continue with the next movement.
- Maximise her marks by preparing before every movement and achieving as many marks as possible for the simpler parts of the test.

> *Your job is to prepare your horse for what's coming up*

Fail to prepare

Although Bumble isn't always the easiest to ride during a test, there are things Victoria can do to maximise marks, even on a day when things aren't going so well. Tania explained the importance of planning ahead: "As the rider, you know what is coming next, but your horse doesn't!

"Your job is to prepare your horse for what is coming up. I didn't know you were going to do the circle you've just ridden. And if I didn't know, then Bumble didn't either. Wendy did a fab thing in one of her books where she wrote out a dressage test from the horse's perspective, one from a horse with a rider who prepares things and one from a horse with a rider who doesn't prepare. It is very funny but also really makes the point.

"The other thing is to pay attention to the simple things in a test, which many riders overlook," Tania continued. "There are often 10 marks available for a simple trot to walk transition, while the same is available for the more complicated half-pass. At the top end of the scale, in the Grand Prix, there are 10 marks available for a canter to trot transition – the same amount as for the whole canter half-pass zig zag and for all 15 one-tempi changes! The best areas to focus on getting right are the centre line and halt, as you will have to do these in every test at every level!"

★★★ Rate this issue

Go to tinyurl.com/RateApr15 for a chance to win a Mountain Horse Crew jacket (see p9).

The healthy horse – a balancing act!

As we head towards warmer weather, we all want our horses to look and feel the picture of health. However, with modern forage and grazing lacking in many essential nutrients it is important to ensure that all equines receive the correct nutrition to help their bodies maintain optimum vitality. But how can we do this in the most cost-effective and simple way?

Fibre first

The horse is a grazing animal, and has naturally evolved to consume forage in order to survive. This forage provides our horses with a natural source of proteins, carbohydrates, vitamins and fibres in a format that is easy and efficient for them to digest. Fibre is a generic term referring predominately to forages such as grass, hay and haylage, but also includes alternative forage replacer products such as high fibre pellets, alfalfa, grass cubes and short chop forages.

Is your forage lacking?

Modern forage and grazing can be deficient in many essential vitamins, minerals and trace elements – so while feeding a diet high in forage is vital, it is recommended that any deficiencies are balanced by supplementing the diet with additional nutrients. This will ensure that your horse is capable of maintaining all-over health and vitality.

What is essential?

A balanced diet contains many nutrients. Look for products with B vitamins such as vitamin B12, B6, B1 and B2, folic acid and biotin, as well as macro minerals such as calcium, phosphorous, potassium, magnesium and sodium and micro minerals such as copper, iron, selenium and zinc. Amino acids, anti-oxidants and fatty acids also play important roles.



Simple and cost-effective

Horslyx provides a cost-effective and simple way to balance your horse's natural, forage-based diet and has been designed to complement the deficiencies often found in grazing. The palatable lick contains a comprehensive vitamin, mineral and trace element package alongside vital anti-oxidants to support the immune system, oil to benefit the skin and coat and biotin, methionine and chelated zinc for healthy hooves. The nature of a lick enables equines to lick little and often and therefore digest the nutrients slowly, in a natural trickle-feeding process. This slows down the rate of consumption, complements the natural digestive system of the horse and helps to keep the horse or pony occupied and engaged.



Horslyx spring health tips

➤ Even horses and ponies who are prone to weight gain require a good level of nutrients to maintain health and support immunity. Feeding a lick is a low calorie alternative to buckets of hard feed and can help reduce boredom when horses are stabled or on restricted grazing.

➤ Feeding a good quality oil source is great for coat and skin health and provides a slow release source of energy.

➤ Flies and insects can be a problem. However, feeding garlic is a tried and tested method of helping to deter biting bugs. Garlic Horslyx is research proven to reduce the risk of irritation from flies.

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Fiona Watkins BSc (Hons), Pro Dip is a fully-qualified, independent equine nutritionist.



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Katie Williams MSc (Dist), R Nutr is the Senior Nutritionist for Dengie.



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Sweet talk

Q My horse had a bout of laminitis in the autumn, although she's recovered well. She is in at night and out during the day, but my yard owner has told me I shouldn't turn her out when it has been really cold and the grass is very frosty. I'm confused, I thought it was just the lush grass in spring and autumn that were the risk for her. Am I wrong?

A **Katie Williams answers:**
Both scenarios are a risk for laminitis. When there's lots of grass in spring and autumn, horses can consume a lot of sugar, simply because they can eat lots of grass. On cold, bright mornings, the problem is that the concentration of sugar in the grass is high, even though there isn't as much grass around.

To photosynthesise, grass needs light, which it uses to produce sugar. The more light, the more sugar there tends to be in the grass. If the plant doesn't need the sugar to fuel its own growth, it stores it as fructan. Grass grows only if the temperature is 5°C or above, so on cold, bright mornings it isn't warm enough to grow. This means the plant stores all the sugar it's making and, because it's bright, the plant produces and then stores lots of sugar.

If your horse has had laminitis, unfortunately, she will be more susceptible to getting it again, and sugar is a big risk factor. So it's crucial that you manage her carefully and consider your options when it comes to turnout. If you have to turn her out when it is cold and bright, put plenty of hay out so that she eats that rather than the grass and, in spring and autumn, consider using a grazing muzzle to reduce her intake.



DID YOU KNOW?

In 2005, a small, preliminary investigation was undertaken to ascertain whether grazing muzzles affect grass intake in horses. Horses were fitted with a muzzle and turned out in a paddock to graze naturally. The study found that grazing muzzles do their job – grazing was restricted by 75–86% when using a muzzle. What's more, when the muzzles were taken off, horses didn't try to make up for lost time eating. But a further study in 2013 determined that the effectiveness of grazing muzzles depends on the grass being grazed and whether it grows upright or flat. This is just the beginning and lots more research is needed.



Feeding without fizz

Q I had my hunter on a coarse mix this season, but it made him very hot. How can I feed him for hunting without fizzing him up?

A **Fiona Watkins answers:**
Hunting regularly requires your horse to be in good condition and physically fit. It is demanding, as there can be long periods of fast canter work, and often fences and hedges to jump. You should, therefore, tailor your feeding regime so that you are providing not only extra concentrate feeds (hard feed), but also extra forage, in order to deliver the additional energy required for this type of exercise.

Forage feeds (fermentable carbohydrates) are metabolised in your horse's hindgut. As fermentation occurs slowly, over a sustained period, energy release is sustained over a much longer period of time – often referred to as safe, slow-release energy. Contrary to popular opinion, however, certain forages (such as sugar beet pulp and oil-based chaffs) can deliver medium energy levels (10–12.5 MJ DE per kg), which is comparable to a standard bag of pony nuts.

It is only when we feed concentrates that the terms 'fizzing up', 'fast release' or 'heating' become relevant. Concentrates are metabolised in your horse's foregut and they are broken down into starches and sugars. These are used for increased energy and power, however, they also contribute to lactic acid production, which can lead to longer-term fatigue. It is worth noting that horses have a finite capacity to digest starch, so you should limit the amount of starch fed to no more than 1–2g starch per kg of body weight, per meal.

As well as starches and sugars, there is another, often overlooked, energy source available to horses – fats. When fed as oil, it delivers two-and-a-half times the amount of energy when metabolised in comparison to a similar weight of hydrolysable carbohydrate. So, for prolonged periods of exercise, oil is a much more suitable energy source than starch or sugar.

There is evidence to suggest that a high-fibre, low-sugar diet supplemented with oil may help to reduce unwanted, excitable 'fizzy' behaviour.

DID YOU KNOW?
Feeding a high-oil diet has a muscle glycogen sparing effect, in which after a sufficient period of adaption, the body preferentially metabolises fat into energy, while sparing the use of glucose.

Fit for the job?

Q Please could you tell me what would be the ideal conformation for a foal or yearling who will be used for general leisure riding? And what would be suitable conformation for a foal or yearling for dressage and showjumping?

A **Natalie Waran answers:**
For a yearling, the best guide to his future ability is his parents. Conformation is strongly heritable and so is aptitude, but sometimes it's just a matter of waiting, training your horse and finding out which discipline he excels in!

Whatever your young horse is destined for, he must have good basic conformation. His limbs should be straight and, from the front, the knees, fetlocks and hooves should all be aligned, with a line through the middle of the limb bisecting each joint equally. His hooves should point to the front. Some yearlings are narrow in the chest and may slightly point their toes out, but this isn't a problem if it's equal on both sides and as he grows up, it will usually correct itself. A wide chest with toes turning slightly inwards is far more worrying.

From the side, be very cautious about a youngster whose forelimbs are back at the knee or who has upright pasterns. The hindlimb is different – it's correct for the hind toes to turn out slightly, but the cannon bones should be parallel. When standing square, the points of the hocks and back of the fetlocks should align vertically with the point of buttock. If the hocks are forward of this line, the hindleg lacks sufficient angulation of the hock and stifle – termed post leg – and the horse may not have the strongest or soundest hocks, and could be more prone to developing joint disorders while growing.

If you want a horse to be a future riding horse, be sure he was bred from a mare who performed well under saddle and is by a sire with a good performance record.

Yearlings are still growing quite fast and usually grow their hind end before their forehand, resulting in them being 'up behind'. This makes it difficult to assess their conformation and also affects their stride length.




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Anna Saillet BSc (hons) is an equine behaviourist and runs Equine Behaviour Solutions.

Worried sick

Q My horse gets sweaty when travelling. He's not overrugged and the windows are open. What can I do? Why is it happening?

A **Anna Saillet answers:**
First and foremost, it's important to ask your vet to give your horse a physical examination to rule out any medical conditions. Sweating in this type of situation is usually caused by stress and anxiety, and it is likely that your horse is finding travelling stressful. Many horses display signs of anxiety when travelling, which may include sweating, pawing, stamping, shaking and kicking out. It is important to closely observe your horse's behaviour around the horsebox and when asked to approach it.

It is likely that he may be giving subtle behavioural indicators to demonstrate his anxiety, but these may be being missed. Horses who are nervous when travelling often either don't eat any of their haynet or if they do eat, they take very rapid snatches of hay from the net rather than eating in a normal, calm manner. All of these signs, even the subtle ones, are indicators that your horse may not be coping with travelling well, and are signs that you need to go back to your training to rebuild your horse's confidence around the lorry or trailer.

When we transport horses it can be very frightening for them, as they don't know where they are going or what will be asked of them when they arrive. They are often transported alone, which can be extremely stressful for a social herd animal and the places we take them to are often situations of high arousal for them. For this reason, it is essential that we do everything we can to help them develop a positive emotional response towards travelling, so that they are provided with the best opportunity to remain calm and safe during the journey, and once they arrive at their destination.

TOP TIP

A bad driver can make going in the trailer or lorry a nightmare for your horse. If you're new to transporting your horse, lessons and lots of practice with an empty vehicle can help.

TOP TIP

Be aware when braking with a loaded trailer or horsebox – you won't stop as quickly as you would in your car. A sudden stop can be uncomfortable for your horse, so plan ahead and brake slowly.



Do it yourself

Q I currently keep my horse on part livery. Will I have a better bond with my horse if I keep him on DIY livery?



A ***Horse&Rider*** **answers:** If you can spare the time, caring for your horse morning and evening is a great way to bond with him. You'll be able to keep track of his health and wellbeing, spotting any changes in his behaviour or eating habits that may indicate he's unwell. What's more, you'll start to learn more about your horse's personality in and out of the stable, which can really benefit your understanding of him under saddle, too.

While fostering a strong bond with your horse is a benefit of having your horse on DIY livery, there are realities of taking sole charge of your horse – including mucky jobs like poo picking, sweeping and cleaning paddock troughs. You might want to band together with other horse owners on your yard to share duties when time is tight. These jobs are time consuming, but many hands make light work and a rota will mean that one person doesn't always get stuck with them.

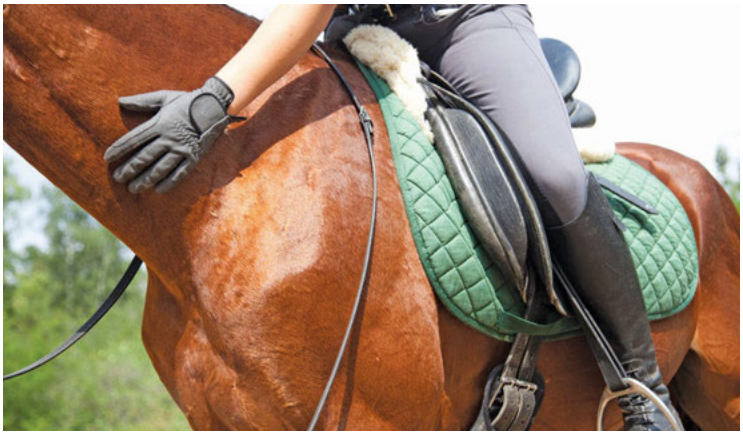
Studies have proven that horses have excellent facial recognition, so there's no doubt that as you spend more time at the yard you'll become a familiar face to your equine best friend. And there's nothing more gratifying than having your horse greet you with a 'Hello' (more likely 'I'm hungry') whinny as you enter the yard.

TOP TIP

Some horses thrive on a set routine. If your schedule permits, establish a set time for feeding, mucking out and turnout. It may help to have similar times to others on the yard to minimise feeding and turnout-related stress.

Good boy!

Q My instructor often tells me to speak to my horse and tell him when he's being a good boy. Do horses understand and respond to vocal cues?



A ***Horse&Rider*** **answers:** Recent research has revealed that horses may not be able to distinguish between tones of voices when learning a new skill. The study used harsh words or soothing praise to help horses learning to cross a tarpaulin. While our first instinct would be to use a soothing word to calm our horses down in the face of a new or scary situation, this study found that neither soothing or harsh words had an effect on the horses' heart rates.

That doesn't mean that horses don't benefit from or understand praise. Horses are very good at learning vocal or visual cues when they are reinforced with ones that they can easily understand, such as a treat. This means that when you give a voice cue, reinforce it with other aids, such as your legs or reins, to help your horse make the association.

So, if your 'Good boy' is well-timed with a scratch on the withers, release of your aids or a treat, your horse will hopefully catch on and get the gist.



Q&A | ASK A VET

OUR EXPERTS



Ollie Pynn BVSc, CertEP, MRCVS is a partner at veterinary practice Rossdale & Partners.



Neil Brimson BVetMed MRCVS is a partner at Garston Veterinary Group.



Wheezing worry

Q My horse was recently diagnosed with severe COPD. We manage it well and he is still ridden three times a week. However, a friend told me she thought it was cruel to keep working him and it would cause his condition to deteriorate faster, so I should retire him. I don't want to cause my horse to suffer – is it fair to keep riding him?

A **Neil Brimson answers:** Allergic airway disease, which we now call recurrent airway obstruction (RAO), rather than COPD, is the most common respiratory disease that equine vets are asked to treat. Most horses with this condition are now treated with inhaled medications similar to those used to treat human asthma. When these treatments are used regularly, and are combined with keeping an affected horse away from the dust and moulds to which they are typically allergic, many horses with RAO can continue to be ridden quite normally. Exercising horses with well-controlled RAO is likely to be beneficial in that it helps mucous clearance from the lower airway.

A horse with poorly-controlled RAO is likely to have a raised breathing rate and may cough a lot when he is ridden. These are both signs that you should consult your own vet, and review the management and treatment of the condition. In such a situation, I am sure that your vet would advise you if it was felt that continuing to exercise your horse was not recommended. While your horse remains fit and well, you should continue to ride him for as long as you can.

Did you know?

Just breathe

The capacity of the equine lungs is immense. During a five-furlong race, an average horse moves about 1,800 litres of air in and out of his lungs, all through his nose, because horses can't breathe through their mouths. This is the equivalent of six bathtubs full of air.

One to one

At canter and gallop, horses take one breath per stride – exhaling each time the leading forelimb strikes the ground. This is due to the momentum of the canter propelling the horse's organs forward, expelling the air from the lungs.

Got the flu?

While equine influenza has been endemic around the world for many years, Australia had its first outbreak in 2007. Epidemiologists believe that the source of the infection was 13 horses who had arrived on a plane from Japan.

Heavy limb

Your horse's shoes should be as light as possible. If a shoe weighs 15 grammes on the hoof, the horse must expend the energy equivalent to lifting 450 grammes at his shoulder. No wonder Thoroughbred racehorses wear aluminium shoes!



Juggling jabs

Q I need to get my new horse vaccinated as he hasn't been done before. Why do I need to get another jab so soon after the first, rather than just one a year? And why tetanus only every other year? Also, if there are horses on my yard who aren't vaccinated, will they put mine at risk, even if he has been vaccinated?

A **Ollie Pynn answers:** Vaccination is used to protect your horse against common equine diseases – in this case, influenza and tetanus. It works by stimulating the body's immune system to produce antibodies that can then fight infection, should your horse be exposed to the disease.

There are different types of vaccine available, but most require two initial vaccinations in relatively close succession. After the first vaccination, your horse produces a small number of antibodies against the disease. A second vaccination is necessary to stimulate a greater production of antibodies. Booster vaccinations will be given to maintain effective immunity.

The frequency of administration varies depending on which disease is being protected against. The immune response to some vaccinations, such as tetanus, is longer lived than for other diseases, such as influenza. This is why tetanus vaccinations only need to be given every other year. If you vaccinate your horse against influenza, then you will protect him against infection, or at least greatly reduce the symptoms of the disease should it occur.

Vets generally advise that all horses are vaccinated against influenza. The more horses who are vaccinated on a yard, the lower the chance of any horses or the yard being affected by disease.

TOP TIP

Some vet clinics offer discounted visit fees on certain days if your yard falls within a designated area. Some also offer package rates that include vaccination and other essential care.

Falling through the cracks

Q Is a horse with sand cracks in his hooves at a greater risk of lameness – or are they purely superficial?

A **Neil Brimson answers:** Sand cracks are vertical splits in the front of a horse's hoof and they run from the coronary band downwards. Any vertical split in the hoof tends to get called a sand crack, even if it is just a superficial, cosmetic flaw. A true sand crack extends right through the full thickness of the hoof wall and into the underlying sensitive laminae. This sort of crack causes pain and lameness, either due to infection or, more commonly, due to the instability that results in pinching of the underlying sensitive laminae. Once formed, these cracks can be a recurring problem and pose a real challenge for vets and farriers to manage.

Sometimes sand cracks originate following a previous wound or injury to the coronary band area. This causes a permanent flaw in the hoof capsule at the site of the injury. If the flaw extends through the full thickness of the coronary band, the resulting sand crack can be extremely difficult to manage and may cause permanent lameness.

Other cases develop when a split in the hoof starts at the ground surface and extends right up through the hoof wall to the coronary band. Horses with this sort of sand crack often have a concave or dished front wall of their hoof and a long toe/low heel foot conformation. This sort of crack can be resolved with remedial farriery, but it can take many months for the crack to grow out, so owners need to be patient and work closely with their farrier.

Whatever the cause of a sand crack, these cases can be very difficult to resolve. If you are considering buying a horse with a sand crack, bear this in mind and take advice before committing to purchase.





Q&A | HORSEY SHOPPING

OUR EXPERTS



Claire Williams is Executive Director of the British Equestrian Trade Association (BETA).



Jayne Ross is a successful producer of show horses, including several HOYS Supreme Champions.

Hazardous hat?

Q I was turned away from a hunter trial because the steward said my hat wasn't safe. It is up to standard, but has a fixed peak. Why did that matter?

A **Claire Williams answers:** Although disciplines and ruling bodies set their own rules and guidelines on what can and can't be worn by riders taking part in their competitions, there does appear to be a general misapprehension over fixed peaks, as current safety standards no longer allow them. Today's modern velvet or velveteen-covered riding hats might look traditional in style and have the appearance of a fixed peak, but that's where the similarity ends. Unlike hats of the past, the peak is no longer an integral part of the crown mould – it's completely flexible, features a degree of movement to conform to current safety standards and will crumple on impact.

There is a range of riding hats on the market that are injection-moulded and have the appearance of a fixed peak. However, this is only cosmetic and the degree to which the peak extends is not sufficient to be considered a peak according to the standards to which hats are made. I believe that British Eventing's recent statement revealing that fixed peaks will be banned in the cross-country phase of its competitions refers to this type of hat. British Eventing is now insiting that only jockey skulls – with no peak, peak-type extensions or noticeable protruberances above the eyes (or to the front) – are to be worn for cross-country.

Perhaps it might be a good idea for you to discuss this issue with the hunter trial to ascertain their reasoning.

Did you know?

- You should aim to replace your riding hat every four to five years, or each time it experiences a hard blow. A hard impact to the hat can cause damage to the hat's inner polystyrene foam liner, which can compromise its ability to protect your head.
- Ensure your hat is fitted by a qualified professional – many tack shops offer this service. An ill-fitting hat may not offer the level of protection that the hat was designed to provide.
- Store your hat in a cool, dry place, away from direct sunlight. Riding hats are sensitive to high temperatures – extreme heat of 70°C or higher may compromise the hat's inner liner.





Stumped by stirrups

Q I am looking at purchasing a new pair of stirrups but I'm overwhelmed by the selection available. What are the different types and when should I use them?

A ***Horse&Rider*** **answers:** The type of stirrup you choose will depend on what activities you take part in and your own personal preferences. Disciplines such as dressage and showing usually call for traditional stainless steel knife edge or Fillis irons with white stirrup treads. But if you want to stand out from the crowd, there are plenty of colourful options available.

Black composite plastic polymer stirrups are available in a variety of different designs to suit all budgets. They're very lightweight and some feature wider stirrup treads, which may help you keep your foot balanced in the stirrup. And if you're prone to losing your stirrups, composite stirrups with magnetic treads worn with specially-designed boots can help.

Some stirrups feature jointed areas, designed to relieve pressure on your knees and hips, keeping your ankles flexed down and lower leg secure. Some riders prefer this type of stirrup, but others dislike them so try before you buy!

Aluminium stirrups, available in a variety of flashy colours, are popular with showjumpers and eventers. They typically feature a wide, grippy base and are lightweight. Some are angled to allow you to keep your toes in without excess strain on your knees. The options for personalisation are endless with these types of stirrups, so if you're after an individual look, they may be your best bet.

If you're safety-conscious, Peacock stirrups with rubber bands designed to release your foot should you fall off and become trapped may look like an attractive option. But beware, these stirrups are designed to take the weight of a small adult or child, so aren't safe for use by most adults. There are options designed specifically for adults that are worth investigating – for example, bent leg irons. Whatever stirrup you choose, always follow the manufacturer's advice for weight limit and care instructions.

Rein him in

Q I enjoy hacking, but want to do some showing. It's time to treat myself to some new reins, what sort would be best to use for both?

A **Jayne Ross answers:** I would suggest buying laced leather reins. I use them in the show ring and at home. When hacking out, I add rubber rein stops and a martingale, which are both easily removed for the ring. I prefer laced reins to plaited ones because they have more body and also have a good grip. Rubber reins are generally no good for the show ring unless it is for a working hunter class, although I very occasionally use thin rubber reins if the rain is absolutely torrential. I never use continental webbed reins because I find it's very easy to latch on to a grip and not hold the reins in the correct place.

When it comes to the length and width of the reins, it entirely depends on the type of horse you have. A small hack will look best with a thinner, shorter rein than a hunter will. If in doubt about what width or length of reins to choose, an experienced saddler will always be able to help you select the right ones.



"I prefer laced reins to plaited ones because they have more body and also have a good grip"



Q&A | IN THE SADDLE

OUR EXPERTS



Ernest Dillon FBHS is a fellow of the BHS, UKCC level three certified showjumping coach and BE Master Coach.



Tania Grantham BHSAI Int SM is a dressage rider and trainer on the British Dressage database.



Photo: Bob Atkins

Getting in too deep

Q When jumping, my horse often chips in a short stride in front of the fence, so we get too deep. It means we often have a rail down and the jump is really awkward. What can I do to fix it?

A **Ernest Dillon answers:** When your horse chips in short strides and gets too close to the jump, it's because he approaches the fence on a long, flat stride, on the forehand. He then has to quickly rearrange himself to engage his hocks in an attempt to get off the ground.

The simple cure for this situation is to be more disciplined at riding a better rhythm with a shorter, more active canter. It's also important to have a balanced position, avoiding tipping forward in front of the movement and adding more weight on your horse's forehand.

Trying too hard to find a good stride can also create a problem. Try to be a little more relaxed about the take-off point. Forcing your eye to find a stride will confuse both you and your horse. Allow your eye to develop over time and trust your horse. Practise riding in rhythm and balance over small jumps, and don't throw away the support of your hand and leg.

Tracking down a trainer

Q How can I find a decent instructor in my area? I need them to teach me on my own horse.

A **Tania Grantham answers:** For me, the best thing is personal recommendation or word of mouth. Social media is a great way to do this. Most disciplines have groups – for example, British Eventing on Twitter and the British Dressage Facebook group. There are also many local horsey groups. Forums can also be a good way of getting positive feedback from people on trainers.

The internet is great for researching instructors. The British Horse Society (BHS) has a register of instructors. In order to be on the register, instructors must have a minimum teaching qualification, hold a current first-aid certificate and attend regular training days. Instructors on the register are fully insured as part of being a member. Most governing bodies also have lists of trainers. British Eventing has accredited trainers, and British Dressage and British Showjumping have a trainers' database.

The most important thing is that you and your horse really click with an instructor. Although I wouldn't advise chopping and changing your trainer, it is important to try a lesson and see how you all get on. Lots of trainers hold clinics at various venues and this can be a good way to try out someone new. You can then go on and organise for them to come to you if really like them.



Photo: Bob Atkins

Learning by feel

Q How can I tell what diagonal I'm on without looking?

A **Tania Grantham answers:**

Riding on the correct diagonal is important, as it helps the horse balance when on a curved line, such as a corner or circle. Technically, you cannot be on either the correct or incorrect diagonal when you are on a straight line, such as the centre line. What determines which diagonal you take is which way you are turning at the end.

In trot, the horse's legs move in diagonal pairs. As I'm sure you know, if you are on the correct diagonal you sit when the outside foreleg is back. This means that the inside hind is also back in the weight carrying phase of the pace. If you are sitting in the saddle when the horse is carrying weight on the inside hind during a turn, this not only helps the horse to balance, but also allows you to influence the way he uses his inside hindleg.

It is usually fairly easy to tell if you are on the correct diagonal or not, by feeling how your horse reacts and how balanced he is. A great way to play with this is on the lunge, if you have a suitable horse and someone who is capable of lungeing you. Start in sitting trot, close your eyes and then take up rising trot. Try to feel if your horse's balance changes – has he tried to fall in or out on the circle? Has he tried to speed up or slow down?

If you aren't sure, then try changing your diagonal and comparing how he feels on the new diagonal. Once you have decided you're on the correct diagonal, tell whoever is lungeing you and they can confirm whether you've got it right. After a few goes, you should find you get used to the way your horse feels when you are on the correct diagonal. You need to do this on both reins, as most horses are one-sided and it will be more obvious on one rein than the other.

If you're not able to lunge, ride on a circle, again starting in sitting trot and, rather than closing your eyes, just keep looking ahead. Take up rising trot and, if it feels right, look down at your horse's shoulders to check. Be careful not to cheat – only look down to confirm if you are correct once you have really decided from feel. Many people surprise themselves at how easy they can find it by feel.

TOP TIP

Try this exercise to simulate what your horse feels when you're on the wrong diagonal on a curved line or circle. Stand straight and then lift your right leg so you are standing on your left leg, staying level with your hips and shoulders. Then turn your body to the left. If you turn without leaning it is pretty easy to keep your balance and stay on one leg as your weight is transferred down though your left leg – much like deepening the inside leg when riding. Then try turning your shoulders right. Your weight will naturally want to transfer to the right leg, meaning it is harder to keep your balance.

It is usually fairly easy to tell if you are on the correct diagonal or not, by feeling how your horse reacts



Q&A | IN BRIEF



Freshen up

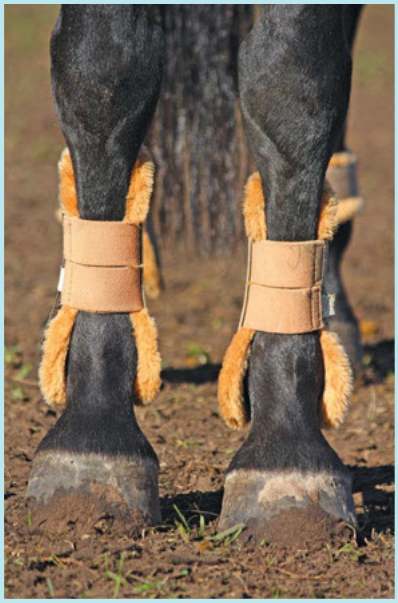
Q I have just bought an older horsebox that is mechanically sound, but is starting to look its age on the outside. Is there any way of freshening up my new lorry?

A ***Horse&Rider*** **answers:** First of all, before travelling in your lorry, make sure it is thoroughly checked by a mechanic – paying special attention to the integrity of the floor and ramp – and that any necessary repairs are made before considering the exterior. Many horsebox specialists offer respraying and can advise you on decals, designs and cost. It is worth getting several quotes and references from previous customers to ensure you're choosing a reputable company.

Spic 'n span

Q I'm attending my first clinic with a well-known instructor and I want to turn myself and my horse out well. What should I wear?

A ***Horse&Rider*** **answers:** Neat and tidy is the key, but plaiting is unnecessary. You can't go wrong with a clean, conservatively coloured polo shirt under a close-fitting jumper, if the weather calls for it, with breeches in a subtle colour. Ensure your boots and tack are spotless. Your horse should be well-groomed, with his mane and tail brushed out well, and any stable stains washed off.



Give him the boot

Q I've just started competing in showjumping and I notice that a lot of the riders use tendon and fetlock boots rather than brushing boots on their horses. What's the reason behind this?

A ***Horse&Rider*** **answers:** Tendon boots are hard boots that shield the back of the horse's forelimb, but are open on the front of the limb. They're usually made from moulded plastic or leather with a neoprene, sheepskin or leather lining. Because they're hard, they protect the back of the forelimb from strikes, brushing and overreach injuries, which are more common in showjumping.

Fetlock boots protect the insides of the hindlimb fetlocks from brushing injuries. Brushing boots are perfectly acceptable for showjumping, but if you're looking for specialised protection, there are many designs of tendon and fetlock boots available.



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Does your horse have a sweet tooth?

Although most of us tend to use mints rather than sugar cubes as treats or rewards for our horses these days, our horses love both and actively look for them if they think we have them in our pockets. This is because, like humans, horses have a sweet tooth. Although we don't know if they can sense all the tastes we can, we do know that horses can distinguish between salty and sweet and this makes sense when you consider that plants don't contain a lot of oil or fat, but are made up of carbohydrates or sugars. Having evolved as a herbivore, the horse's sense of taste has developed to seek out carbohydrates.

The downside to this is that too much sugar is associated with diseases such as laminitis. In his natural environment, the horse would spend a long time eating, consuming relatively small amounts at any one time as he roams over a large area in search of food. In contrast, the domesticated horse is fed concentrate meals that are high in sugar and starch, or is allowed to graze on relatively rich, improved pasture and so consumes higher quantities of sugar much more quickly. This is why problems such as laminitis can occur and why, to avoid these problems, we need to provide horses with fibrous feeds to chew that are low in sugar and starch.

How do I reduce my horse's sugar intake?

Look for feeds that contain no added sugar, such as Dengie Healthy Hooves Molasses Free – the only molasses free, Laminitis Trust approved, complete feed, with just 2.5% sugar – that is found naturally in the fibrous ingredients used in the feed. Even straw and alfalfa contain some sugar and so a feed is rarely, if ever, sugar-free.

To put the sugar level in Healthy Hooves Molasses Free into context, an average grass hay would typically contain at least 10% sugar and so Healthy Hooves Molasses Free at 2.5% is very, very low sugar. Hay can be soaked to remove some of the water-soluble carbohydrates (sugar), but this shouldn't be relied on as a means of making it suitable for a horse or pony requiring a low sugar diet. The best approach is to find a hay that is low in sugar in the first place – those that are cut later when the grass plants are more mature are most likely to have the lowest sugar content.



As you would expect in a feed designed by the experts in fibre nutrition, Dengie Healthy Hooves Molasses Free contains a full range of essential vitamins and minerals, many of which are naturally occurring from alfalfa and so easier for the horse to absorb. Key nutrients for promoting healthy hooves, such as biotin, are also included at levels that research has shown will make a difference to hoof horn quality. The starch level is also very low at just 1.5%, which is because there are no cereal grains included in the formulation – these are the main source of starch in mixes and cubes.

CASE STUDY

Jake, an eight-year-old Connemara, has always been a good-doer so when he was diagnosed with Equine Metabolic Syndrome, owner Emma knew she had to take action. "I keep Jake on a cattle farm where the grazing is fantastic, but not ideal for a 15hh good-doer. Jake gradually piled on the pounds and, before I knew it, he was very round! So I arranged for a Dengie nutritionist to visit. She weighed Jake and gave him a personalised diet plan.


Before

Jake at the start of his weight-loss programme, weighing 516kg


After

Jake weighing in at a healthy 417kg and looking fantastic!

"I can't believe the difference in him," says Emma. "In the last year, he has lost 99kg. It has been hard work but I've been determined and it has paid off – he looks and feels fantastic! I'm really looking forward to the competition season where he can show off his new figure!"

Jake's daily regime

- Feed – 2kg of Healthy Hooves Molasses Free, split over two feeds.
- Forage – 3kg of soaked hay. Weigh your hay prior to soaking to help monitor calorie intake. Soaking will help reduce sugar and starch, essential for horses and ponies prone to laminitis, EMS and PPID (Cushing's).
- Grazing – restricted by wearing a muzzle. Wearing a grazing muzzle can help reduce grass consumption by 50–75%.
- Exercise – for an hour or more, six days a week, either schooling, lunging or hacking.

for more information call the Dengie feedline on:
Dengie 0845 345 5115
www.dengie.com

MODERN WORMING

Victoria South, an equine internal medicine specialist at Liphook Equine Hospital, offers the latest information to help you guard your horse against current threats from worms



Photos: The Liphook Equine Hospital, University of Liverpool, Rob McNeil Photography

Our expert



Victoria South MA Vet MB CertAVP(EM) DipECEIM MRCVS is a European Specialist in Equine Internal Medicine. She graduated from The University of Cambridge in 2006 and spent three years working as an equine ambulatory vet, joining the medicine referral service at Liphook Equine Hospital in 2009.

Wormer resistance is becoming an increasingly common problem among equine intestinal parasites or worms. The term means that intestinal parasites are not being killed off by routine doses of the worming drugs that are regularly used in horses.

Wormer resistance was first reported in the 1960s. Now there is evidence of resistance to every class of wormer available in the UK, and no new wormer drugs have been launched by pharmaceutical companies since ivermectin in the 1980s. It is important that horse owners use wormers responsibly to minimise problems, but it can be challenging to find reliable and clear advice.

This article will guide you through the most important facts relating to intestinal parasites in horses – which species of worm are important, how to treat them, and how to reduce the risk of your horse developing a significant worm burden.



Faecal worm egg counts are a good way of estimating which adult horses are contaminating the pasture with worm eggs so that treatment can be targeted to those individuals rather than worming an entire group



Above: Cyathostomin larvae invade the wall of the large intestine and can emerge in the winter and spring, causing diarrhoea, weight loss and failure to thrive. Inset, right: Cyathostomin eggs as they appear under a microscope

Worms TO WATCH OUT FOR

SMALL REDWORM (Cyathostomins)

These worms look like red threads to the naked eye – they are a common intestinal parasite affecting both young and adult horses.

The adult worms live in the horse's large intestine and lay eggs that are spread fairly evenly through a horse's faeces. The eggs pass out in the faeces and develop into larvae on the pasture. Grazing horses eat the larvae which move down the intestinal tract to the large intestine.

During the autumn and winter, larvae on the pasture are stimulated to go into hibernation. They invade the wall of the horse's large intestine and emerge out of the intestinal wall in the late winter and spring months (this process is sometimes called encysted redworm).



We can estimate the burden of adult cyathostomins in a horse's intestine by measuring the number of eggs per gramme of faeces. There are no reliable blood tests or alternative ways of estimating if an adult horse has a cyathostomin burden.

The majority of adult horses will carry a very low burden of small redworm that will not cause disease. However, young or immunocompromised horses might acquire a higher burden, particularly in pasture that is over-grazed, or where droppings are not picked up regularly.

Also, a recent scientific study has shown that horses with equine Cushing's disease are more likely to acquire a cyathostomin burden than similar-aged horses who don't have equine Cushing's disease.

Potential problems

Occasionally, young horses develop a large burden of encysted larval cyathostomins that erupt suddenly from the intestinal tract (often in the late winter or spring). The syndrome is called **larval cyathostominosis**. There is catastrophic damage to the large intestinal wall and affected horses show signs of weight loss, failure to thrive and diarrhoea.

Protein and water are lost from the gut wall, causing the horse to become dehydrated and have a low blood albumin (protein) level. This low blood protein level (hypoalbuminaemia) can lead to fluid accumulation in the horse's lower legs, the sheath and along the floor of the abdomen.

Treatment

Vets treat larval cyathostominosis with a combination of steroid anti-inflammatory drugs and wormers such as moxidectin that have some activity against larval cyathostomins.

In the UK, adult cyathostomins have been shown to be resistant to many other wormer drugs such as fenbendazole and if the drug doesn't work on adult worms, vets and researchers suspect that it is very unlikely to kill the larvae involved in this syndrome.

Some horses require blood plasma transfusions and gentle isotonic fluid therapy to replace the protein and water losses from the large intestine. In some cases, the damage to the wall of the large intestine is so severe and extensive that it causes septicaemia, which is fatal in some cases.

It is important to remember that this syndrome is caused by immature larvae not adult worms, so although larvae might be seen in the droppings/diarrhoea, there are not necessarily eggs in an affected horse's droppings.



Worms TO WATCH OUT FOR

TAPEWORM (*Anoplocephala perfoliata*)

Tapeworms have a slow life cycle that has one part in the horse and another part on the pasture. During the pasture phase, the tapeworm infects pasture mites that are then ingested by the horse as he grazes. Once in the horse's intestinal tract, the tapeworm attaches to a particular part called the ileocaecocolic valve, leading to inflammation and scarring (fibrosis).

Potential problems

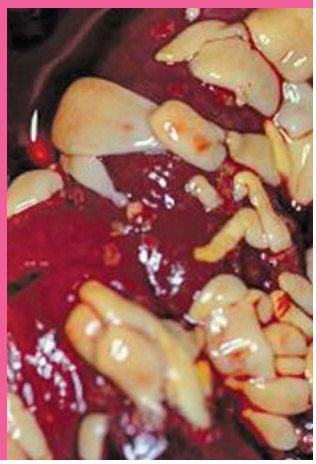
In several scientific studies, a high tapeworm burden has been associated with different types of colic – impactions of the small intestine and spasmodic colic. Diagnosing tapeworm burdens is a challenge because the eggs are released in packages, not shed evenly through a horse's faeces, so they are often not visible when faecal samples are analysed. This leads to false negative results, where the tapeworms are present but the faecal test has a negative result.

A blood test to measure a horse's antibody levels to tapeworms has been developed. However, a high result only indicates that the horse has developed an antibody response to the tapeworms and does not definitively confirm that the horse has a current tapeworm burden. As such, false positive results can be seen where the horse has a positive blood test result, but does not have a current tapeworm burden.

A salivary test for tapeworm antibodies has been launched recently, but there is no independent scientific evidence to prove that it is a dependable test.

Treatment

Since diagnosis of a tapeworm burden is not totally reliable and infection may cause a threat to horse health, vets often recommend worming for tapeworms once or twice a year (depending on management, horse factors and previous veterinary history).



LARGE REDWORM (Large Strongyles)

In the 1970s and 1980s, horse owners used to worry about this worm, which is larger than the cyathastomin (p77).

Potential problems

Large redworms can migrate from the intestinal tract along blood vessels of the intestines to other organs, leaving a trail of destruction behind them. Infestation with this worm can cause colic by obstructing the blood flow to a part of the intestinal tract.

Treatment

This worm is generally sensitive to all of the commonly-used wormers, so it has become much less of a problem for horses in recent decades.



Insets (left to right): Tapeworm. Pinworm eggs from the horse's dock area identified under the microscope

PINWORM (*Oxyuris equi*)

These small white worms (about the size of a beansprout) reside at the end of the horse's intestinal tract in a section called the small colon. The female worms migrate down the small colon to the rectum and lay eggs in a sticky fluid around the anus.

Pinworms do not cause disease along the intestinal tract and in many horses the infection causes no obvious signs.

Potential problems

Some horses get a very itchy tail and dock area after the eggs have been laid. The more they itch, the more the horse deposits eggs on fence posts, gates and stable doors, which could infect other horses and could reinfect the itching horse.

Horses with a bothersome pinworm infestation may look like a sweet itch case, but only the tail area is affected rather than the mane and tail, as in genuine sweet itch cases. Any horse with a particularly itchy tail area should be checked for pinworms. Since pinworm eggs are not laid by worms in the intestine itself, the eggs do not show up on routine faecal worm egg counts.

Therefore, vets diagnose a pinworm infection with the Sellotape test – patting clear tape (sticky side down) on the anus and dock, and checking under the microscope for pinworm eggs.

Treatment

In recent years, there appears to be some resistance developing in pinworms to many types of wormer, so once a diagnosis has been made and the horse receives treatment, your vet will often repeat the Sellotape test to be sure the infection has gone.



Parascaris may affect foals and weanlings, but horses develop good immunity as they mature

Worms TO WATCH OUT FOR

Worms that affect foals and weanlings

PARASCARIS

This is a large, stout, white roundworm. It can be the width of a Biro pen and up to 50cm long! It is a significant intestinal parasite that causes disease in foals and weanlings up to six to nine months of age. However, it doesn't cause disease in mature horses – they do not acquire a large burden because exposure as a young horse tends to give life-long immunity.

The life cycle has several stages in the foal...

1. The eggs are eaten by grazing foals and weanlings.
2. The larvae hatch out of the eggs and migrate from the small intestine through the liver and lungs.
3. The larvae travel up the trachea, and are coughed up and swallowed.
4. The larvae mature in the small intestine. The life cycle takes 45–90 days. Parascaris worm burdens can be detected through routine faecal worm egg counts.

Potential problems

Parascaris infection can cause respiratory signs such as coughing and nasal discharge as the worms migrate through the lungs. In foals with a high burden, it causes failure to thrive and gain weight, loss of appetite and lethargy. The worms can cause a spontaneous, complete obstruction of the small intestine, leading to sudden-onset, violent colic that will not resolve without surgical removal of the worm blockage under general anaesthetic.

Treatment

There is resistance reported in Parascaris to every wormer type used in the UK – your vet can give advice on the best worm control for young horses.

STRONGYLOIDES WESTERI

This is a small, thin roundworm – white, thread-like and 8–9mm long – that causes little or no disease in adult horses.

Potential problems

It causes diarrhoea and weight loss in young foals from 10 days of age, who become infected by ingesting worm larvae in their mother's milk. The larvae migrate from the pregnant mare's intestinal tract to the mammary gland before foaling and are swallowed when the foal suckles.

Treatment

Infestation in the newborn foal can be avoided by worming the mare with a suitable wormer at the time of foaling. Diagnosis of *Strongyloides westeri* can be made by detecting the eggs or larvae in the foal's faeces.



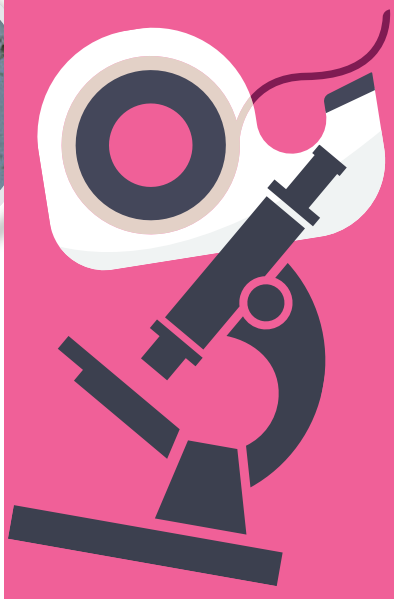
Insets (left to right): Parascaris can block the small intestine. *Strongyloides westeri* larvae and eggs – these cause diarrhoea in young foals, who can pick up the infection from their mother's milk.

TESTING YOUR HORSE FOR WORMS



Faecal worm egg count

- **Cyathostomins**
 Faecal worm egg count.
- **Tapeworms**
 Eggs are not reliably shed in faeces. The blood antibody test simply reports the quantity of a horse's antibody level against tapeworm and can remain high after a horse has cleared a tapeworm infestation.
- **Pinworms**
 The Sellotape test – clear sticky tape applied to the anus and dock area, and examined under the microscope.



Targeted and strategic worming

Traditionally, horse owners have used drugs – wormers – to control the internal parasite burden in their horses. All horses on a yard might be wormed several times per year without checking an individual horse's actual worm burden. This is called 'interval worming' and it results in many horses being wormed far more frequently than they need. It can also become quite expensive!

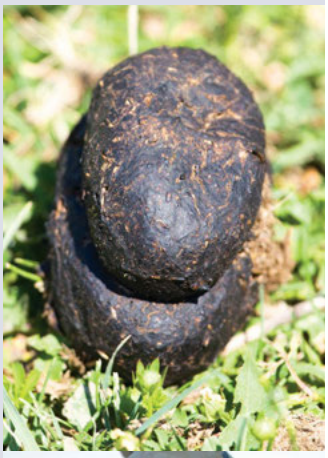
Additionally, worming horses more than necessary increases the risk of intestinal parasites developing resistance to wormer drugs. This means that the worms are no longer susceptible to the killing action of the drugs. Resistance has been reported in cyathostomins (small redworms) and Parascaris (important in foals and youngsters) to all of the major groups of wormers that are used in horses.

The more adult worms in the horse's intestine are exposed to wormer drugs, the more likely the worms are to develop resistance. Therefore, worming adult horses indiscriminately, whatever their worm burden might be (interval worming), could increase the rate of resistance developing to wormer drugs.

An important recent development in the treatment of intestinal parasites is targeted worming. This means testing the faeces of individual adult horses for cyathostomins and then only worming if necessary, ideally on the advice of the vet who cares for your horse. When using faecal worm egg counts to monitor adult horses' worm burdens, research has shown that less than 10% require worming for redworms.

Horses on a targeted worming programme still need to be treated for tapeworms once or twice a year – your vet can advise how frequently your horse needs to receive a strategic tapeworm treatment. Targeted worming programmes can be modified for youngsters with guidance from your vet.

Although manufacturers of herbal worming products argue that their products may help to control a horse's worm burden, there is no independent scientific research published to show that these products are effective in any way or, more importantly, to confirm that they are safe to give to horses.





An important recent development in the treatment of intestinal parasites is targeted worming



Reduce the risks

What else can be done to reduce the chance of horses becoming infested with intestinal parasites? If you reduce the amount of eggs and larvae on a particular pasture, you will reduce the chance of your horse ingesting the larvae and developing a worm burden. The following management measures have been shown to reduce the concentration of eggs and larvae on pasture...

- **Picking up droppings regularly** (twice a week or more frequently if possible) has been shown in scientific studies to be more effective than interval worming in controlling the cyathostomin burden in adult horses.
- **Co-grazing** horses with cows or sheep has been shown to be helpful because these species 'hoover up' the worm larvae and eggs, but do not become infected themselves.
- **Reduce the population density** – the fewer horses grazing a particular area, the lower the concentration of eggs and larvae present in the pasture.

Responsible action

Wormer resistance is becoming increasingly common among equine intestinal parasites. It's important that horse owners use wormers responsibly, and your vet is a good source of information on how to treat the important worm species discussed here and how to reduce the risk of your horse developing a significant worm burden.

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4 reasons your horse is amazing

Horses have evolved over thousands of years into incredible athletes, says H&R's Céleste Wilkins

Believe it or not, the modern-day horse evolved from a small, dog-like mammal with five toes called *Hyracotherium*. Over thousands of years, the horse became better adapted to running – an essential skill to avoid being eaten by predators! These adaptations make the horse an amazing athlete, something riders can take for granted. Here are some traits that make your horse special...



1

Amazing legs

Wild horses' survival depended on their ability to flee from predators. Survival of the fittest means that the ancestors of today's horses were specially adapted to run as quickly as possible. Maybe you can't imagine your laid-back cob outrunning a mountain lion, but his legs are designed to be extremely efficient when it comes to running.

The horse's distal limb – that is, from the knee down – doesn't have any muscles, just tendons and ligaments. The tendons connect the muscles of the proximal limb (above the knee) to the bones of the distal limb. Tendons and ligaments hold the bones together, keeping them aligned as your horse moves.



The superficial digital flexor tendon (SDFT), deep digital flexor tendon (DDFT) and suspensory ligament (SL) have another function – in the forelimb especially, they act like springs to store and release energy as they stretch and recoil over the bones during movement.

When the horse places his foot on the floor during locomotion and the fetlock drops to absorb the shock, the tendons stretch over the fetlock, gliding over the sesamoid bones. As the foot rolls over the toe, the tendons release their energy, snapping back and allowing the limb to be quickly lifted. All this greatly increases the efficiency of the limb and decreases the energy the horse spends to move – especially good when he has to gallop miles to outrun predators.

TOP TIP

Your horse's limbs are designed to cope with the strain of locomotion. They adapt over time to the type of work he's doing, but when starting heavy work or after time off, make sure you slowly build up your horse's work level to avoid injury.

Galloping at the brink

The efficiency of the horse's lower limb comes at a cost. During gallop, his tendons and ligaments are working at near breaking point. Scientists have recorded normal strain to the SDFT in galloping horses that is very close to the strains that would cause it to rupture, when tested in a lab. Luckily, the horse's body is designed to take the strain and the SDFT is stiffer than the DDFT to be able to cope.

Tendon trouble

It's no wonder the horse's tendons are so susceptible to injury. The risk increases as the horse gets older, because tendons and ligaments don't heal as efficiently as other tissues in the body, and accumulated strain over the years weakens them. Stem cell treatments have become more common in equine medicine and are regarded as the gold standard in equine soft tissue injury repair.

2

Sweaty neds

Have you ever taken your horse's saddle off on a hot summer's day to find frothy foam under the saddle cloth? Your horse's foamy sweat is key to reducing his body temperature and is due to a protein called latherin. Latherin acts as a surfactant, reducing surface tension on the horse's skin and helping cool the horse down through evaporation.

This protein is important because horses have thick, hairy, waterproof skin, but their athletic demands mean that they must have the ability to cool down quickly when galloping. Wild horses don't have the luxury of being clipped, so latherin evolved to aid the body's natural cooling process. It acts to wet the horse's hairs, which facilitates water flow for evaporation and, as a side-effect, creates a frothy foam.

What's more, a high protein concentration on the horse's skin may make it inhospitable for micro-organisms, possibly attributing an anti-microbial function to horse's sweat – but more research is needed to be sure.

Did you know?

SWEAT GLAND

The horse's sweat gland is simple and is designed to expel sweat as quickly as possible. The glands funnel the electrolyte-rich sweat solution onto the skin to quickly cool the horse down. The high salt concentration, coupled with the high latherin concentration, makes for efficient evaporation – but as horse owners know, it leaves behind sweat stains that can be hard to brush off!

STOMACH

The upper half of the horse's stomach is lined with non-glandular tissue that is similar to the tissue that lines the horse's oesophagus.

GUT

Horses are referred to as hind-gut fermenters. That means their gut can process and absorb plants that can't be absorbed or digested by the small intestine.

SPLEEN

The amount of blood stored in the spleen varies, and spleen size isn't necessarily proportionate to the horse's size. A small horse can have a big spleen and a big horse can have a small spleen!

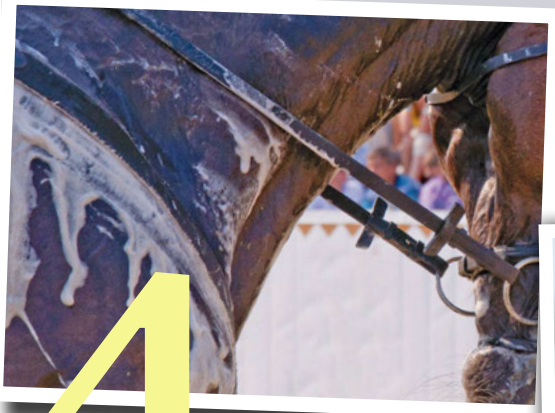
3

Great guts

Equine nutritionists, vets and feed companies are always talking about how horses need fibre as their main source – but do you know why? The horse's prehistoric ancestors survived on a mixed diet of fruit and foliage, but as the climate became drier over millennia and grasses started to evolve, his teeth became more adapted to eating grass. The modern horse's gut is incredibly efficient at breaking down forage and is designed for continual consumption.

While many nutrients are absorbed in the small intestine, the fibre is efficiently broken down by fermentation in the large intestine. The large intestine comprises the caecum and colon. In a 500kg adult horse, the average caecal volume is 33 litres and the colon is 80 litres – that accounts for 60% of the total gastrointestinal volume.

The horse's large intestine has billions of naturally-occurring microbes that break down fibre into volatile fatty acids (VFAs). VFAs are a key energy source for the horse and their synthesis releases heat, which is why it's important to feed plenty of forage in winter. When horses are fed too much starch, the balance of microbes changes. While it's amazing that horses can adapt to food sources in this way, alterations in the horse's hindgut microbial population can have a negative impact on the horse's health, resulting in metabolic problems.





4



Bloody fast

Blood doping is a prominent, yet illegal, way to increase performance in athletics by increasing the number of circulating red blood cells. Red blood cells carry oxygen, so additional blood allows more oxygen to be transported to the muscles, allowing the athlete to run for longer before fatigue hits. Horse owners may be surprised to learn that their horses 'blood dope' themselves – but it's not illegal. The horse's secret weapon is the spleen, which stores up to one third of the body's red blood cells. When the horse gets excited, nervous or stressed, the spleen contracts, increasing his ability to flee the situation. The spleen can also contract during exercise, giving horses a turbo boost to win the race or escape a predator.

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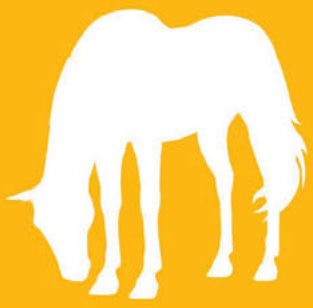
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...what next for laminitis?

New scientific research is aiming to help horses with laminitis – the oldest disease in the book. Vet Tom O'Keeffe from Rossdale & Partners explores the latest thinking on this painful, debilitating disease



Our expert

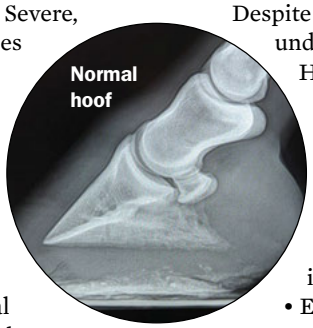


Tom O'Keeffe MVB MRCVS is an equine clinician with the ambulatory veterinary team at Rossdales in Newmarket. He is very familiar with the racing and stud industries.

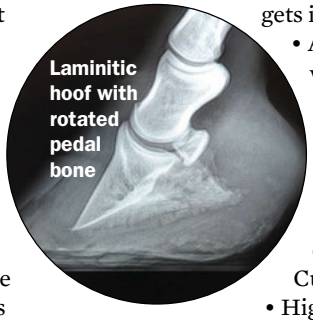
In a veterinary practice-based survey of horses in northern Britain, published in 2012, horse owners ranked laminitis as the second most significant disease to affect horses. It is one of the most serious, crippling diseases of horses, ponies and donkeys. Severe, recurring cases of laminitis can reduce a horse's active life or result in him being put to sleep to prevent further suffering. Treatment, whether successful or not, can require a lot of time and money, and requires a good deal of energy from the owner for an extended period of time. It's no surprise, then, that there is plenty of research going into treating this.

What happens when a horse gets laminitis?

Laminitis is a painful inflammatory condition of the laminae, which are supporting, leaf-like tissues that bond the hoof wall to the pedal bone in the horse's hoof. It can affect any horse, of any age or sex, at any time of the year. And although it's traditionally considered a disease of fat ponies, laminitis can be triggered by a variety of metabolic or physical causes in any horse.



Normal hoof



Laminitic hoof with rotated pedal bone

It's caused by weakening of the laminae within the hoof, leading to painful tearing of the support structure suspending the pedal bone within the hoof capsule. If laminitis is not treated promptly, the pedal bone can drop (these cases are described as 'sinkers') or rotate downwards. Laminitis and founder are not the same. The term founder describes the sinking of the horse's pedal bone. Laminitis can, but does not always, result in founder.

What are the causes?

Despite much research and study, our understanding of laminitis is far from clear. However, it is universally agreed that it stems from a diverse set of processes (including sepsis, endocrine disorders and excessive weight) that result in inflammation of the laminae, which damages the pedal bone's support structure. Common causes of laminitis include...

- Excessive intake of grass or grain engorgement – for example, if a horse or pony gets into the feed room.
- After-infection – for example, a mare who has recently foaled and has retained the afterbirth.
- After administration of excessive doses of certain drugs, such as corticosteroids (eg, prednisolone).
- Enlargement of the pars intermedia of the pituitary gland (PPID) or Cushing's disease.
- High insulin levels such as seen in equine metabolic syndrome.
- Concussion from riding on hard surfaces.
- Excessive weight-bearing on one leg due to severe injury or lameness in the opposite leg.
- Stress from long-distance transport.

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Recumbency is normal in horses, but may be a warning sign of laminitis

IT'S AN EMERGENCY!
Treat laminitis as an emergency. Call your vet immediately and try to place the affected horse on a deep bed of shavings.

"In mild cases, the horse may just be 'pottery'. If not treated correctly, he may deteriorate so far he is unable to rise"

Study findings

A recent study, 'Pasture Associated Laminitis: A UK Perspective', looked at the severity and outcome of pasture associated laminitis that was managed in routine equine practice in Britain.

In this study, 107 cases of laminitis were reviewed, including 43 female and 64 male horses. There were 33 small ponies, 45 large ponies/cobs, 17 small horses and 12 large horses.

- 76 horses were termed to have mild/moderate laminitis while 31 horses were classified as having severe laminitis. 43 cases had previously suffered from laminitis.
- 77 horses responded well in the opinion of three veterinary surgeons and 102 of the 107 horses were doing well eight weeks after initial treatment.
- Of the 88 riding horses, 48 returned to ridden exercise and it was shown that those without previous incidence of laminitis were 2.6 times more likely to return to ridden exercise.
- Lower bodyweight, optimal body condition, and the degree and stage of laminitis were significantly associated with success when it came to managing the laminitic horses in the study.

Below: typical laminitic stance



Image courtesy of Dr S. N. Collins

Signs and diagnosis

Laminitis more commonly affects both fore feet, but can affect one foot or even just the hind feet. In most instances, the affected horse will shift his weight from one limb to the other, will be reluctant to move and may lie down. There is sometimes heat in the hooves and an increased digital pulse.

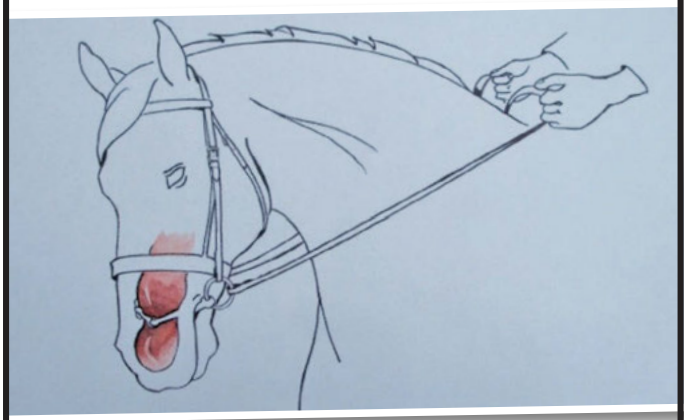
The digital pulse is the blood flowing through the digital artery into the hoof – the greater the inflammation within the hoof, the stronger the digital pulse will be. A digital pulse can be difficult to find in a healthy horse, but if you have a laminitic horse, it can be helpful for monitoring the amount of inflammation in the foot.

In mild laminitis cases, there may be only a slight change in the horse's gait, with him moving in a pottering way. These animals will go on to deteriorate further unless they are rested and treated correctly. In severe cases, however, the animal will be unable to move, may be panting, sweating and resting back on his heels, and in the most severe cases, will be recumbent and unable to rise. These severe cases may have to be put to sleep if their pain cannot be controlled.

Occasionally the diagnosis of laminitis can be difficult, particularly where the signs are subtle. Your veterinary surgeon may recommend X-rays to help with diagnosis and in choosing the best course of treatment. X-rays of the feet can also help the vet give you an indication of how severe the laminitis is, as well as helping your farrier to trim the feet appropriately. In laminitic cases where an underlying metabolic condition such as Cushing's disease is suspected, blood tests will be necessary to determine the nature and extent of the disease.

THE TRUTH CAN BE HARD TO SWALLOW

There are some basic facts every horseman needs to know about the way bits work in the horse's mouth:



- The horse's tongue goes from the top of his throat to his lips, running vertically down his head.
- Look at the angle of pull from the rider's hands to the bit.
- The tongue is pulled back towards the bottom jaw
- Tongue pressure interferes with swallowing and causes tension throughout the horse's body - try placing your finger on your own tongue and try to swallow!



- All forms of bit resistance arise from the horse trying to evade tongue pressure.
- Restrictive nosebands (eg flashes & grackles) don't solve anything, they only hold the horse's mouth closed around an uncomfortable bit, preventing swallowing & causing more tension.

Understanding the basic facts of bitting is critical for the welfare of the horse. Read the Myler's book with DVD "The Level Best for Your Horse."

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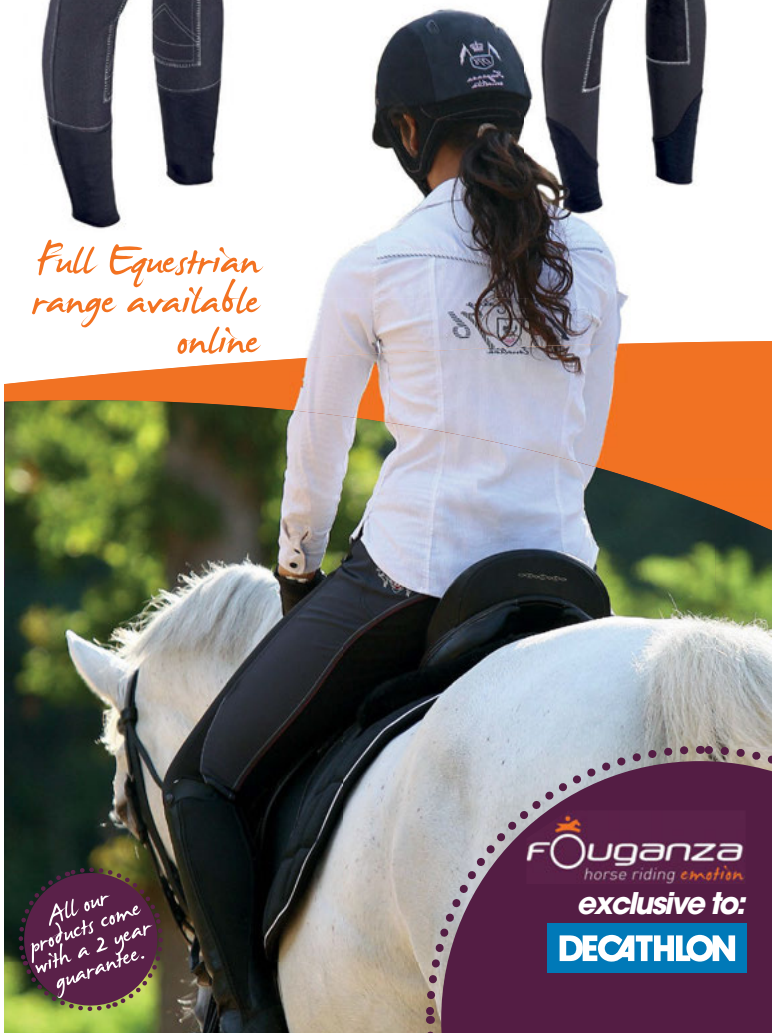
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Treatment of laminitis

Medical measures

Laminitis often originates from an organ system remote from the foot, such as the gastrointestinal, respiratory, reproductive or endocrine systems. Therefore, treatment during the acute stage needs to aggressively address the initiating cause of laminitis.

The principal medications used to treat the inflammatory response in early laminitis are nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs), such as phenylbutazone and founixin. The analgesic effects of NSAIDs are important from a humane perspective, but should be used judiciously so that your vet is able to accurately monitor the clinical signs in the feet.

Experimentally, acepromazine – a commonly-used sedative – increases digital and laminar blood flow in normal horses, but it has not been tested in horses with laminitis. Horses who have developed laminitis associated with insulin resistance, such as in equine metabolic disease, may benefit from early intervention to increase insulin sensitivity.

Measures should be taken immediately to reduce the weight of obese horses. Ice or cold water therapy should also be applied to the lower limb and hoof as soon as laminitis is suspected.



Farriery work

In the acute phase of laminitis, the farrier can redistribute weight to the back of the foot by applying deformable material to the solar surface so that the bars, frog and sole become load-sharing with the hoof wall. Thick styrofoam, deformable impression material and pads or boots are available for this purpose. Placing the horse in sand can also help redistribute the weight.

Trimming and shoeing have always been the mainstay of treating chronic laminitis, and the main aim is to reduce or remove the adverse forces on the compromised laminae. Realignment of the pedal bone to create a better relationship of its solar surface with the ground is used as the basis of farriery in laminitis. This should promote and produce hoof wall growth at the coronet and sole growth beneath the pedal bone. X-rays taken by your vet are crucial in aiding the farrier to accurately and appropriately trim a laminitic horse's feet.

Surgery options

In horses with chronic and severe laminitis, deep digital flexor (DDF) tenotomy – cutting of the tendon – can be a useful procedure for treating chronic laminitis in severely-affected cases. However, knowing when to use it poses a dilemma. After a DDF tenotomy, the pastern bone will move lower and backwards relative to the pedal bone. This concentrates the load on the palmar soft-tissue structures of the foot, rather than redistributing the load on the solar surface of the pedal bone. It should not be done without other options being explored and only used as a last resort in severe cases.

Recent developments in laminitis treatment

Stem cell therapy

Rood & Riddle Equine Hospital in Kentucky have been experimenting with the use of stem cells as a treatment for laminitis. Mesenchymal stem cells (MSC) are pluripotent, meaning they can differentiate into multiple types of cells, including those that make up bone and connective tissue.

As research has already shown that stem cell therapy helps improve the quality of healing in some tendon lesions, veterinary surgeons hope it can also help repair laminar damage.

A study looked at 30 horses admitted between 2010 and 2012 with chronic laminitis. The horses underwent MSC therapy in addition to their routine treatment. Each horse received 20–30 million MSC per affected foot at one-month intervals, averaging three to four treatments. Stem cells can be injected into blood vessels in the lower limb by a technique known as regional limb perfusion, where a tourniquet is applied above the injection site for 20 minutes in a bid to retain the cells in the bloodstream of the area where they are needed. Alternatively, the stem cells can be injected directly under the skin at the coronary band.

The theory behind stem cells in laminitis treatment is to use the healing properties of the cells to help repair laminar damage and stabilise the pedal bone within the hoof capsule. Stem cells have also been shown to have an anti-inflammatory action – an additional benefit to the laminitic horse.

Of the cases in the study at Rood & Riddle, 70% were deemed to be successful. However, it is important to point out MSC treatment was used as part of a multimodal approach, along with traditional laminitis therapies. Stem cells are available in the UK for use in your horse, but they are costly and this study demonstrated that, for the best results, it is important to use them in the first 30 days following the onset of laminitis.

Laminitis and maggot therapy

A high profile case of a Thoroughbred racehorse called St Nicholas Abbey in Ireland in 2013 publicised the use of maggot therapy as a treatment for laminitis.

This therapy was pioneered by Dr Morrison of Rood & Riddle, Kentucky, and aims to use the healing properties provided by the larvae to help with cases of chronic laminitis with sepsis or necrosis within the foot.

The maggots used are sterile ones bred in a laboratory for medical therapy. The continuous debridement and healing properties of the larvae are thought to produce enzymes that destroy and consume dead tissue and bacteria, and stimulate the growth of new blood vessels. New maggots are introduced periodically to gorge themselves on the dead tissue and the maggots also excrete anti-bacterial saliva.

In the case of St Nicholas Abbey, this therapy was reported to be having a positive effect by the specialists managing the case. Unfortunately, a terminal episode of colic sadly ended the great horse's fight for life.



Cryotherapy

A scientific study published in the Equine Veterinary Journal in 2013 showed that ice (cryotherapy) could be an effective aid in the prevention of laminitis in severely toxic animals. The anti-inflammatory and analgesic effects of cryotherapy have been shown to help prevent laminar inflammation and the study aimed to show whether cryotherapy could prevent laminitis in at-risk horses.

Laminitis is a common consequence in horses who are clinically compromised, such as those suffering from colitis, a colon infection that can lead to laminitis associated with sepsis (the presence of harmful bacteria). In the study, performed at Michigan State University, it was demonstrated that horses whose limbs were iced were 10 times less likely to develop laminitis than those who weren't.

Ice is one of the oldest forms of medical therapy, dating back to the times of Hippocrates. It can be applied in a variety of ways. Commercial ice boots are probably the most useful tool in applying ice to the lower limb of the horse safely without causing skin irritation. The ice must be changed every three hours to maintain frozen ice within the boots.

Professor Susan Holcombe of Michigan State University, who conducted the study, and her fellow clinicians now make it standard practice to ice all four feet of all horses diagnosed with colitis, as well as many horses post-colic surgery, for 24 hours after clinical signs of sepsis have resolved, to help prevent laminitis.

A possible breakthrough

The drug t-TUCB belongs to a group of anti-inflammatory compounds called sEH (soluble epoxide hydrolases) inhibitors and was discovered by a scientist in UC Davis, California, more than 40 years ago.



At UC Davis in 2013, four horses suffering from laminitis who had previously been unresponsive to all other modes of treatment were treated with t-TUCB. According to initial reports, one horse experienced a complete remission that has lasted for more than a year, and the three others showed some improvement. It is very early days with this particular treatment and it's currently not available as a treatment option in the UK, but the initial promising results merit further investigation.

In a nutshell...

Laminitis sends a shiver of fear down the back of horse owners and veterinary surgeons around the world and this truly global disease can have an impact on all horses from a miniature pony to the elite athlete. Laminitis should be treated as an emergency by horse owners and prompt, collaborative efforts between veterinary surgeon, farrier and owner can lead to a successful outcome in many cases. The recent developments in laminitis research give us a greater understanding of this disease and this knowledge will undoubtedly allow us to improve the welfare of our horses now and in the future.

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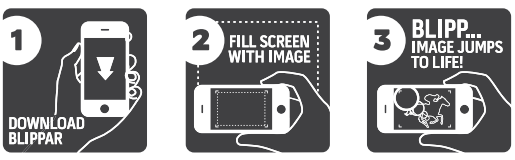
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Date of preparation: November 2014. AH630/14

Lynn Russell showing clinic part 2

Show stoppers

Hogged or plaited, bring the professional touch to your horse's mane with showing star Lynn Russell



Lynn Russell is a genius at finding and nurturing equine showing talent. You may have seen her riding her fabulous cobs into the ribbons at the big shows and championships. What you might not know is that those gleaming, beautifully-schooled and conditioned horses you see Lynn riding arrive at her yard straight off the boat from Ireland, scraggy, dirty and untrained. A few months in Lynn's care and they're transformed, and contending some of the biggest showing classes in the UK.

So how does she do it? And what can we learn from her to improve our own horses' condition, turnout and chances of success in the show ring? *Horse&Rider* spent the day with Lynn to find out.



With her flair for trimming, schooling and presentation, Lynn Russell can create a fabulous show horse out of what looks like a very ordinary equine. This month, she explains how to make manes marvellous, enhancing the horse's neck with plaiting or hogging. Read on for Lynn's trade secrets!

As told to Alison Bridge. Photos: Trevor Meeks

Step-by-step Hogging

Lynn's top tip

➤ Keep your cob's hogged mane clean by wiping it with a cloth dampened with non-foaming wash.

1



Hogging involves clipping all the horse's mane off. Start at the bottom and run the clippers up the neck.

2



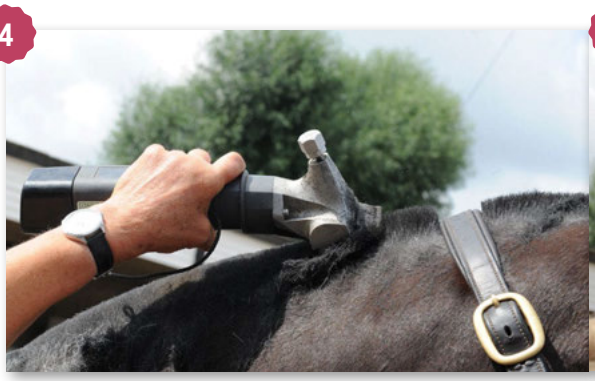
As with clipping the coat, it's best to hog in long strokes so you don't leave any lines.

3



Take off the sides of the mane, being careful you don't cut into the coat. Angle the clippers and keep the pressure on the top of the blade, not the side, as you move up the neck. This will avoid cutting into the coat.

4



Go back over the mane to take off any hair you missed the first time.

5



Manoeuvre the headpiece of the headcollar to clip over the poll to the forelock.

Lynn's top tip

➤ When you're hogging, put a bucket of feed on the floor so you can get your clippers right into the wrinkles of his neck when he stretches down.

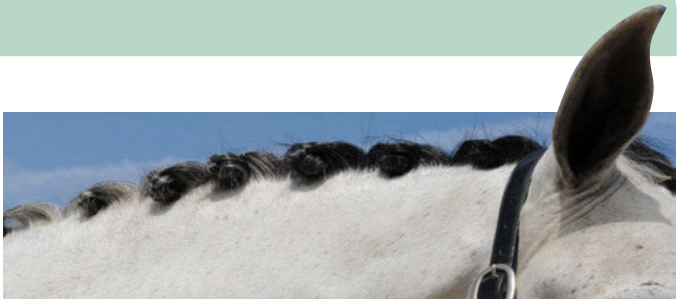
If your horse dislikes being clipped, or has not been hogged before, use small, quiet clippers to build his confidence

Strategic hogging

Corky here has a strong neck so I've kept the hogging line even – all the same length from withers to poll. But if your cob has a less-muscled neck, hog the mane so it's slightly longer at the centre and tightly clipped at the top and bottom, graduating it carefully so you give the impression of a natural arch. You can also hog your cob a few days before a show to let the mane grow a little and make the neck look more muscular.

Make the most of your horse's mane

Horses should be plaited for showing. The exceptions are cobs who are hogged and breeds that are shown 'au naturel', such as natives and Arabs. It takes practice to get them perfect, but beautiful plaits enhance a beautiful neck, and clever plaiting can make less-than-perfect necks look a lot better. Here's how I do it.



Step-by-step Plaiting

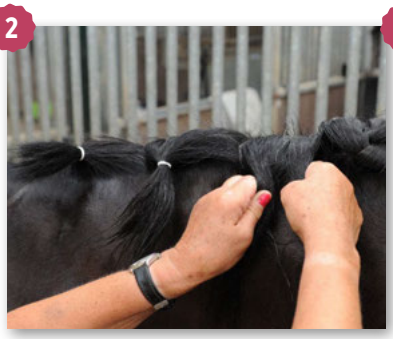
For the professional look, use thread to plait your horse, choosing a colour as close as possible to that of his mane. You need to start with a well-pulled mane that isn't dirty, but isn't too clean either. If you wash it on the day of a show, it will be very slippery, so do it two or three days before. I always use plaiting spray, which helps give me a good grip on the hair and keeps it under control, too.

1



Comb through the mane and bunch it into even sections with elastic bands. Thread your needle. Take a section of the mane from its band and comb down, spraying with plaiting spray if necessary.

2



Split the section into three, even-sized smaller sections.

3



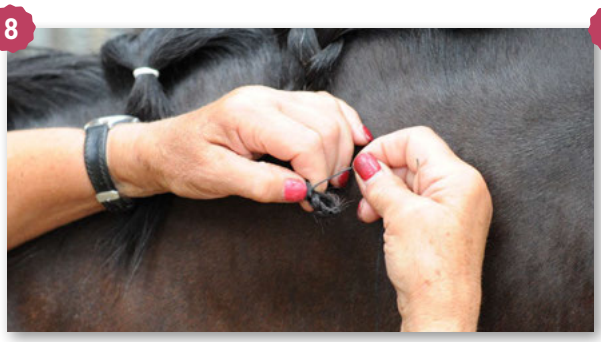
Start plaiting, pulling each section tight (for exceptions, see below).

4



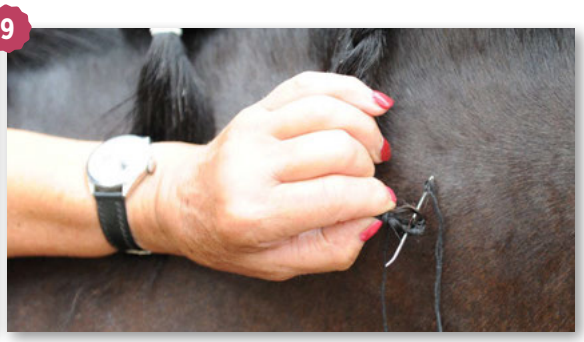
Plait down as far as you can to the bottom of the hair.

8



Wrap the thread around it a couple of times – this prevents hair sticking out.

9



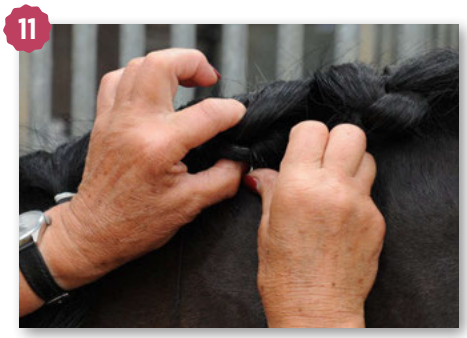
Stitch through the plait again from back to front.

Strategic plaiting

You can enhance your horse's neck by the way you plait it...

- Thick neck? Start plaiting tightly from the top, and roll and stitch the plaits so they lie on the side of the neck.
- Thin neck? Make your plaits sit higher by starting to plait a little further away from the roots, and pushing the plaits up as you roll and stitch up, so they sit on top of the neck.
- Short neck? Make lots of small plaits and do not trim the mane at the withers.
- Long neck? Make fewer plaits and clip off a little of your horse's mane at the withers.

11

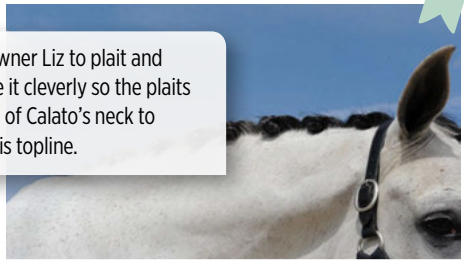


Roll up the plait.

Tricks of the trade



I've given working hunter Calato's plaits a lovely shine by spraying them with a high-shine spray. The base of his mane has been clipped and needs to grow out. When it's been clipped like this, it gives the impression of shortening the horse's neck, which is not good for showing.



I taught owner Liz to plait and she's done it cleverly so the plaits are on top of Calato's neck to improve his topline.



When I turn Calato round you can see how his plaits build up the topline and give him more neck.

5



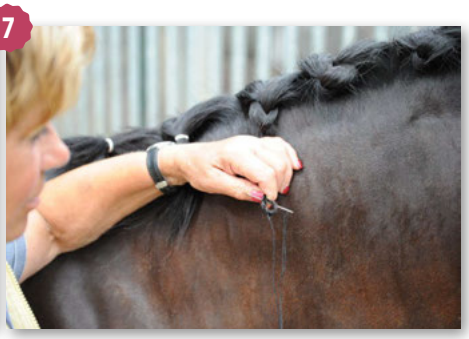
Push the needle through the plait from the back to the front.

6



Take the needle around the back and push it through again, then take it around the other side and push it through.

7



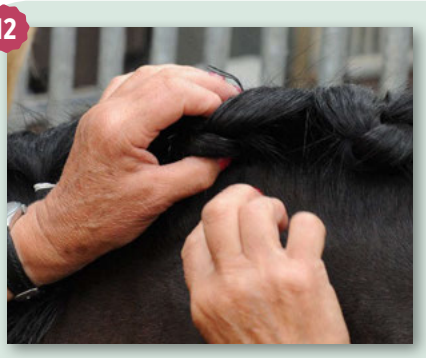
Catch up the end of the plait by stitching through a little further up, from back to front.

10



Then double the end up under the base of the plait and pass the thread through the top of the plait from back to front.

12



Pass the thread back and forth through the plait a few times – don't wrap it around or you'll break the hair and create a funny shape.



Look, no stitches! If you have plaited tightly enough, you won't be able to see them, as with the finished plait here.

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The whole picture

You can see how trimming and presentation make a great deal of difference in these before-and-after photos of Corky. He looks like a really smart cob once his head is sharpened up and his legs are clipped to enhance his conformation – and of course, I've made a few more strategic changes!

Corky before

Corky is a 15hh, six-year-old coloured cob owned by Rebecca Murch. He was shown as a native originally, but Rebecca wants to enter him in SEIB Search for a Star cob classes and has done a few Equifest qualifiers. "So far, so good," says Rebecca. "He's at the teenager stage at the moment and can throw his toys out of the pram. But he's fine most of the time." Conformation-wise Corky is a nice cob – he has good basics and is what I call an 'improver', with the potential to do quite well.

Corky's conformation



Corky's head is quite nicely set on. You should be able to get two fingers in behind the jaw, so when you're riding him he'll be able to flex at the poll.

Corky is rather upright in front with slightly straight pasterns. His joints aren't trimmed properly and actually look quite heavy. When they've been trimmed up you can see quite a difference (see p100) – I'll show you how in next month's article.

His forelock and mane need hogging again – but he has a good neck.

Corky has a good, short cannon and plenty of bone. This is the circumference measured just below the knee, and should be eight-and-a-half inches for a lightweight cob like Corky.



Corky's tail is too long and an absolute mess. It looks as though it has been clipped! It needs to be left alone for a year, then pulled properly – ideally by me!

He has nice hindleg conformation, although he's a little bit thick through his hocks. We can tackle that with careful trimming.

He's actually a very compact cob. He's broad through his back with a nicely muscled backside.

Corky's original tack



The throatlash is a little bit too tight and needs to be let out.

The cheekpieces are fine.

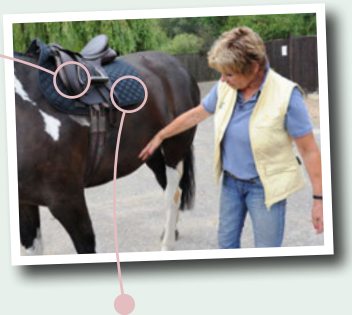
The pelham and double reins are correct for showing. All my cobs go in pelhams – I only have one who wears a double bridle.

His noseband is too big and so is his browband, which makes his head look quite coarse.

The noseband doesn't match the bridle – there's a mix of black stitching and white stitching.



Corky's saddle completely covers his shoulder and makes him look very short in front. He has a nice shoulder with a good 45° angle, but the saddle completely swamps him.



The saddle makes him look as if he's too fat because it has such a short panel – it makes him look very deep through the barrel.

The numnah should be brown and fit neatly under the saddle.

The saddle flap is far too short from here to here, which means any ride judge is going to get their boots caught and not be able to ride in the correct position.



The saddle balance is all wrong – it's much higher behind than in front, which will tip the rider forward. Most cobs are heavier in front and if you're tipped forward, you won't be able to get his hocks underneath him.

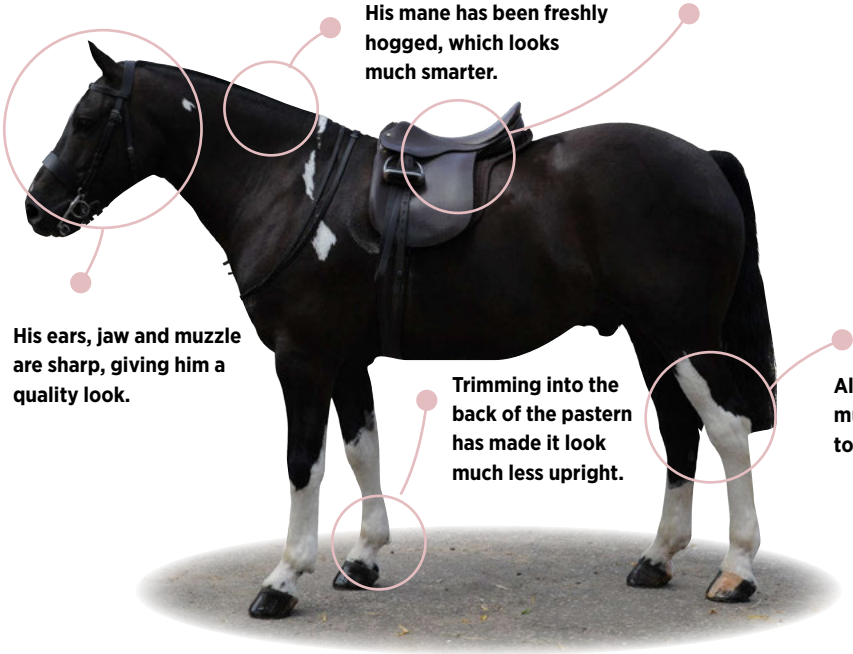
Saddle matters

When you ride a horse in a saddle that doesn't fit, like Corky's, he won't move very well because it is loading his shoulder. It also makes him look short in front and long behind because it's sitting in the wrong place. It's a GP saddle and reasonably straight cut, but the whole design of the saddle is inappropriate. Showing horses is all about proportion and how you tack up a cob makes a massive difference. Corky looked better without his old saddle – with it, he looks like a pony. That's where you need to be careful. If you don't present a cob properly, he can look more like a pony.

Corky after

Here's Corky all clean and trimmed, and in much better tack. Now when you ride him, he really moves because you've released his shoulder. And he doesn't look fat, he looks like a cob!

The saddle is big enough for a ride judge and the longer flap makes him look less fat. It shows off how much shoulder he has.



His mane has been freshly hogged, which looks much smarter.

His ears, jaw and muzzle are sharp, giving him a quality look.

Trimming into the back of the pastern has made it look much less upright.

All of his leg joints look much cleaner, thanks to careful trimming.

Next month

Find out how Lynn trims horses' heads and legs to give them a clean, quality look.

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Go to tinyurl.com/RateApr15 for a chance to win a Mountain Horse Crew jacket (see p9).

A classic saddle with benefits that wow!

Due to popular demand, innovative saddle makers, WOW Saddles, have launched the brand new Classique range of saddles, which provides customers with many of the revolutionary WOW features, at a fraction of the cost!

The Classique collection, powered by WOW, is the result of research in the market, which identified that many customers wish to provide their equines with an 'off the peg' saddle that is packed full of unique features, without the higher price tag. After careful development and prototype testing, the Classique has now been perfected to offer riders just this.

The Classique collection of saddles offer customers a traditional flocked saddle with the benefits of WOW's unique tree and panel system.

The WOW patented Y-shaped carbon fibre tree with lateral flexion

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A conventional tree has points that stop approximately 7.5in down from the head, but the Classique is different. It doesn't have points – instead the front of the tree is a lobe, which incorporates the double stirrup bar and is then extended by the PPS on top of the panel to create a much greater bearing surface without point and stirrup bar pressures. The support surface of a Classique saddle is greater than that of the same size Western saddle! This means you can achieve support and lift without increasing pressure on the wither area, ultimately encouraging better movement in your horse.

The Classique collection is capable of taking all of the WOW headplate sizes and styles so they can fit horses from extra narrow up to 8X wide. In addition, each of the headplates come with three spinal profiles so you can fit the finest to the very broadest wither with the same tree.

To find out more visit classiquesaddles.com or call 01227 831614

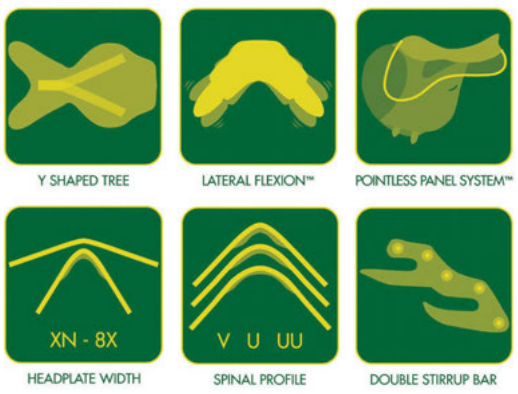
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Customer satisfaction



Amy Tickle owns Max, a 14-year-old, 16.1hh, Irish Draught X gelding. He is currently competing at Elementary/Medium level dressage. Amy says: "I decided to try a WOW Saddle and felt such a difference. I could finally get my lower leg where I wanted and Max's massive shoulders had room to move, so he could step under more! Sadly, I couldn't afford the saddle, but then WOW launched the Classique range. It really appealed to me because it is still adjustable in the area that Max needed, but was cheaper.

"Because Max is a big horse, I have to be careful that he can't move the saddle around his huge back. The first time I rode in the saddle, I forgot to do my girth right up – but it didn't move, even when doing lateral work. The Classique still allows Max the freedom in his shoulder we so desperately needed, because he doesnt have a big, flashy, warmblood movement. Obviously hard work and lots of practise have gone into our improvement. But the Classique saddle has allowed us to make this improvement – it helps Max to feel on top form and develop in his shape and allows me to finally have a better position in my seat and legs. Since having the saddle I have gained consistent 7.5/8s for my riding in tests, which used to be around the 6/7 mark and Max now gains 7/7.5 for his paces and has received a wonderful 8 for his medium trot!"





The Classique saddle range is available in a Dressage, Jumping and GP style in black or brown, sizes 16in, 17in and 18in. RRP £1,499.

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LYNN RUSSELL

Hogging a horse ready for the show ring

Following on from Lynn's feature this month, watch her demonstrate the most effective way to introduce a horse to being hogged.

> Just be cautious, but be very firm and positive

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This is HAPPA Second Chance Autumn. She is currently available on the 'Horses and Ponies Protection Association' Loan Scheme.











Vital statistics

Beautiful 12.2hh, Dartmoor, 8 years, dark bay mare.

Autumn's Blog

Hi, My name is Autumn, I have a lovely kind nature and just love attention. I was broken to ride at HAPPA and I really enjoy my ridden work. I am beautiful, intelligent, with lots of potential and I am keen to make further progress in a Forever Home with a capable and confident rider.

Autumn's Care Officer Jo says…….

Autumn works well on the flat and is very capable over trotting poles and small cross poles, she is confident in traffic and hacks out well alone and in company. She is a responsive ride and will require a capable and confident rider.

She has been lightly shown in hand and under saddle, recently receiving 60% in her first intro dressage test. Autumn has already attended a large prestigious equine event in 2014 and proved to have a very level headed outlook on life.

Autumn has fabulous stable manners and is easy to load into a horse trailer she also turns out well with mares or geldings. She would thrive with the one-to-one care and attention a new loan home could provide.

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HAIR TODAY, coat management GONE TOMORROW!



Is your horse looking a little moth-eaten? Do you have horse hair everywhere? Horse&Rider *explains how to deal with your horse's spring coat change*

Spring is around the corner and while there's lots to look forward to – including your horse's lovely, short, sleek summer coat – getting rid of the straggly, long winter one is not so much fun. Hair and scurf gets everywhere and you can't ignore that moulting mess under his rug.

Horses change coat twice a year, in spring and autumn, and it's a particular problem at this time of year when they are growing a shorter summer coat at the same time as the longer, old winter coat is falling out – the hairier the horse, the worse the moulting.

Dirty, matted, half-grown-out coats can harbour bacteria and parasites, especially when the temperature starts to rise. Even if they're kept clean, a thin, uneven selection of long hair overlaying patches of short, new coat does not look pretty.

Your horse can also get uncomfortably hot and sweaty if he makes any kind of effort on a warmish day with the remains of his winter coat still hanging on. Then he could come back from exercise wet, not dry off properly and get uncomfortably cold when the sun goes in.

So what to do?



Get grooming

TIP
Cover up with a non-stick layer of clothing when you're grooming – overalls are good but an old shirt will suffice.

The main solution to spring coat change problems is regular, thorough grooming. There are some amazing grooming lotions, sprays, shampoos and washes on the market – almost as many as there are hair products for humans! But good, old-fashioned elbow grease is key, especially at this time of the year, to get rid of loose hair and scurf.

A simple rubber curry comb works well on a moulting coat if your horse isn't clipped or is partially clipped, and discarding large, oval wads of old hair is very satisfying! Use it in a circular motion for the best results.

Grooming mitts or Super Groomers (which look like large pan scourers) do a similar job, with the added bonus that you can get them into awkward areas because they are so flexible. These are brilliant for removing dried-on mud and for washing horses, too.

Shedding blades are grooming tools specially designed to take out moulting hair and scurf, or 'dander' as the Americans call it, and they're said to leave the coat shiny, too. In fact, all coat grooming does this – it stimulates the skin, which contains the hair follicles and sebum glands that secrete oils, so the horse produces his own coat conditioner!

To do the best possible job with a moulting horse, first groom him with a shedding blade. Next, use a rubber curry comb, then a stiff brush and lastly a body brush. Finally, apply a little coat conditioner, except in areas where his tack sits, which would make it too slippery. Be careful when using stiffer grooming tools on his tummy, face and below the knees and hocks, because these are especially sensitive areas.

Showing rider and turnout expert, Louise Bell, adds: "As soon as your horse's summer coat starts to show, then more grooming is needed with soft brushes as this stimulates the skin to get the whole of your horse's coat through at the same time."

TIP
Exercise your moulting horse, despite how scruffy he looks – it's good for his circulation and, therefore, his coat health.

Spring has sprung

If you've looked after your horse for a few years, you'll know his moulting patterns and have some strategies to deal with them. Remember, though, that coat change is mainly dictated by daylight hours and this varies from year to year – your horse's age, nutrition and health all play a part, too. So be prepared for the big moult and you and your horse will get spring off to a great start!

Soap-free cleaning

Exercising horses whose coats are changing is also a conundrum at this time of year. Try as you might, horses sweat and it needs to be removed. Walking the last part of your ride will dry him to a certain extent, but not so much if the weather is very warm.

If your horse is in desperate need of a bath but the weather is too cold, you can 'hot cloth' him. Run a bucket of hot water and add a good glug of no-rinse coat wash – some are antibacterial and antifungal, which is useful if he's prone to skin infections.

Dip a small towel into the water, wring it out well and rub him down with it, majoring on sweaty, dirty areas. If your horse has sensitive skin, it's a good idea to have an extra bucket of plain hot water alongside, too, so you can go over him again to remove any residue. Either way, give him another rub down with a clean, dry towel, then rug him up and voilà – a dry-cleaned horse!

Health from within

A healthy coat is the by-product of general good health and a properly-balanced diet is essential for shiny horses.

Oil is known for promoting coat shine – from within and on the surface. There are many oil-based products you can add to your horse's feed, as well as feeds that contain oil. Louise says: "Putting a bit of oil in horses' feed is a must, as this is the worst time of the year for dry skin. We use a great soya oil supplement that keeps the skin and coat in great condition. If topical help is needed, a rinse or wipe of the coat with baby oil in hot water is great. If skin is really bad, coconut oil is even better – but expensive!"

Although we all need to be aware of the dangers of spring grass for laminitis-prone horses, good pasture is fantastic for horses' coats when they're coming out of winter a little scruffy – and you should see the benefit of extra time in the field!

On a nice day, turnout without a rug also benefits horses. A good roll helps get nasties out of their coats – just remind yourself, 'that's not a filthy horse, he's just applied a mud-pack!'

TIP

Use a summer sheet under your horse's rug and change it regularly to prevent the loose hair becoming embedded in the lining of his top rug.



The mane line

Another common problem at this time of year is caused by rugs and, specifically, neck covers. Does your horse's mane have an embarrassing gap, or is it thin all the way up thanks to nose-to-tail winter clothing? It needs some TLC, too.

Louise asserts: "If at all possible, no neck rugs! This is the time of year you need your horse's mane to grow, so remove his neck cover!"

Leave thin areas of mane to grow back, only grooming them gently with a soft brush so you don't remove any more hair. If you're pulling the rest of your horse's mane, Louise advises: "Any thin or thinning manes should be trimmed with scissors or a cutting comb – not pulled – to get them to thicken up."

TIP

Keep anything made of fleece away from moulting horses.

Bath time



Bathing, of course, is a great way to get horses clean and to wash away unwanted hair.

Louise says: "I tend to bathe my horses with a mild shampoo that doesn't strip the coat of natural oils, then I put them under a heat lamp! But for those who don't have the luxury of these great devices, I'd say only give a bath on the right kind of day."

Watch the weather forecast and plan your horse's bath time, making sure you have clean, dry towels to hand and a cooler rug – not your best one, it will get covered in hair! Wash with warm water if you can. It cleans more efficiently and is kinder to your horse, too – how would you like to be given a cold bath on a spring day? If you don't have hot water, a couple of kettles of boiling water added to cold will help. Don't forget to rug him afterwards – it can turn cold quickly.

Louise adds: "If your horse is not clipped, bathing is the perfect time to rubber curry comb him to stimulate the skin, which in turn helps the coat change."

TIP

Put hair you've removed in a bucket or old feed bag to stop it blowing around the yard.

Step away from the clippers?

You might think that the simple answer is to clip him, but if you do this too late in the year – now, in other words – it can remove new, growing hair and potentially affect your horse's summer coat. Louise states categorically: "Stop clipping at the end of January. Some horses differ, but that's my main rule."

Other people carry on clipping when they need to all year round, especially if their horses compete in high-intensity sports like showjumping and eventing. Horses with very thick coats may welcome clipping outside of the winter months, too. For example, if you have a horse with Cushing's or a hairy native and want to do sponsored rides in spring, he'll benfit from a clip – even if it's a smaller trace or bib clip. Some show cobs and ponies are clipped all year round, too, and look extremely smart for it.

But you need to be careful, especially if you want to show a horse with a fine, slow-growing coat. In winter, you can clip regularly as the coat grows back quickly – it doesn't even matter if you get a few tramlines, as they disappear in a week or so. But in summer, clip marks can stay for a long time because there is little or no coat growth, so step away from the clippers if you want to guarantee the best turnout!





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Wellbeing

Let's make babies

Part 3

Horse breeding has come a long way in the last few decades. Horse&Rider *looks at how modern stud practice produces healthy foals from happy mares and stallions*

There is no more bucolic a scene than a mare grazing in a rolling meadow with a foal flopped out in the long grass, snoozing in the sun. The whole picture conjures up something hopeful and special about a life spent in the company of horses. For any mare owners expecting a foal this spring, hold that image in your heart. You may need to recall the peaceful scene when you're breathlessly wrapped around your foal, steering and cajoling him towards the paddock, while your normally docile mare prances sideways with one eye on her baby and the other straining towards your grassy destination. The route to the field may feel long and eventful on some days with your foal!



Case study

Britannia's Caberet 'Twiglet'

Twiglet is the first foal for Simon and Bridget Hall's Connemara X TB mare Stripteasel 'Tilly'. Tilly foaled down at West Kington Stud under the watchful eye of stud manager, Tessa Clarke, and her team.

Tessa explains: "Twiglet is a beautiful filly, she arrived in perfect proportion and has proved to be naturally athletic and balanced. A combination of poor weather and a bit of scouring during Tilly's foal heat meant that the pair spent some time in a foaling box over the last few days. While they were indoors, Twiglet had some extra handling as we needed to clean and treat her bottom."

Simon says. "We'll be taking Tilly and Twiglet home in a couple of weeks, so I wanted to spend some time working with them, getting to know Twiglet and getting an idea of their routine. Claudia, who helps us with the horses we have at home, will be doing a lot of the day-to-day handling and she's been dying to meet little Twiglet and say hello to Tilly, too."



Tilly and Twiglet get used to being led together

As told to Kelly McCarthy-Maine. Photos: Bob Atkins. With thanks to Tessa Clarke and the team at West Kington Stud, westkingtonstud.co.uk, and Anne Dicker at Catherston Stud, catherstonstud.com



New mum alert!

Each mare deals with the arrival of her foal in her own way. For some, the foal comes as a giant shock, and she may need a bit of support and encouragement through the bonding process. Others, especially maiden mares, can fall devastatingly in love with their foal and become foal proud. Many mares take the foal – and everything their new role entails – in their stride, as if they were mothers all along. Be mindful that the rush of hormones and the new sense of responsibility your mare feels may drastically affect her behaviour – she is likely to be on high alert and 100% focused on her foal. Be wary of her hindquarters and don't block her view or access to her foal. This swing in temperament and behaviour may be heightened when it is a mare's first foal.

Foal slip dos and don'ts

Foal slips are tiny headcollars for foals. They have adjustment points on the crown, nose and jaw, and are usually made of leather with small, metal fittings. Leather is the preferred material because it will break easily in case of emergency, freeing the foal from danger or injury.

The slip needs to fit securely, so the foal cannot get his hooves caught up in it, nor catch himself on anything in his environment. Standing for the foal slip to be put on and taken off is essential training for the foal.

Growth warning

Foals grow incredibly quickly and a foal slip that fits one week may be dangerously tight the next, causing trauma, injury and scarring. It is essential that foals do not wear foal slips without supervision, and that the fit is checked each time the slip is put on.

See overleaf for how to introduce a foal slip

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Leslie Sutcliffe

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Introducing the foal slip

Foals at West Kington Stud are judiciously introduced to the foal slip at 12 hours old. Here's how they do it...



Step 1: Put a headcollar on the mare. The mare is your best ally when handling the foal – she needs to be restrained with a headcollar before approaching the foal. Do not block her view of the foal – if she becomes worried or concerned and can't see her baby, she will walk over or through people to get to him.



Step 2: Position the mare so she forms the point of a triangle with a wall. Curious Twiglet brought herself over to investigate what was going on.



Step 3: With one hand on his bottom and one hand across his chest, manoeuvre the foal so his bottom is against the wall and he is facing the mare.



Step 4: Hold the foal slip open. Aim to keep the nose of the foal slip wide as you put it on to avoid touching the whiskers.



Step 5: Cross the crown piece of the foal slip as far back as you can down the foal's neck to avoid touching his ears – another sensitive area. Once you have the buckle threaded through, slide the slip forward towards the ears as you secure the strap.

Thread the lead rope through the underside of the foal slip noseband, as shown in the photo above, not through the ring. By threading the lead rope through and not clipping the rope onto the headcollar, the rope will fall away if the foal gets free.

Top tip

➤ Though they are sensitive and not perfectly balanced, foals are strong and quick, and needn't be treated like glass. Handle the foal as his mother would – sympathetically, but insisting on good manners and etiquette.



Danger!

No matter how experienced the handler, foals are wily characters who can get free. A dangling lead rope attached to a headcollar can frighten the foal, making him panic and run – avoid accidents by threading the rope through the foal slip so it drops away if trodden on or caught up.

Top tip

➤ Never pull on the foal's delicate, easily-damaged head or neck. Instead, tap the foal to encourage him to move over or forwards and cuddle the foal to slow him down or stop him.

Whisker wise

Foals are born with crumpled-up whiskers around their muzzle and eyes which gradually straighten out. These first whiskers are hyper-sensitive to touch and, therefore, foals can have strong reactions to people touching them on the nose or roughly banging their whiskers as they put on a foal slip.

Whisker hair follicles are surrounded by clusters of nerve endings which send signals to the brain about proximity (like how far to go to reach mum's teat) or textures (how to root out the stud cube in mum's chaff and stud mix feed). These raw and powerful nerve reactions help to protect the foal as he explores much of his new world by sticking his nose directly in it.



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Horse&Rider *advises that it's safest to wear gloves and a hard hat when handling horses*

The call of the wild

Stallions tend to get the reputation for vitality and virility, but mares are sexually entire animals with strong natural drives, too. As her pregnancy progresses, more and more of the mare's behaviour will be dictated by hormones and instinct. In blooming health, receiving excellent nutrition and most likely enjoying a natural horsey lifestyle turned out with other mares, broodmares can feel the call of the wild quite strongly. It's important to tailor your management regime so as to cause the mare the least stress. Many studs and specialist reproductive vet practices handle their mares in pairs for this very reason – bringing two mares in from the herd at the same time for examination or the farrier is much safer and less stressful for everyone!

Leading a mare and foal

The photos on the right show Tilly being led to the paddock, while two handlers escort her foal, Twiglet. It is best to handle mares and foals as a team of at least two people. The mare handler has a lot of responsibility to keep control of the situation.


1


2


4a


4b


The first walk

Safety in numbers

In the very early days and depending on the environment, it can take up to four people to lead a mare and foal safely. A third person can walk ahead and prepare the gates, and a fourth person can walk behind to encourage the foal forward. Before going anywhere with a mare and foal, make sure your route is safe and free from farm traffic or dogs, and close off any gates or escape routes.

Tessa explains: "Depending on the weather, the strength of the foal and health of the mare, we will often start leading the mare and foal to a nursery paddock the day after foaling. The mare and foal will be turned out on their own in a relatively small paddock near the yard. Mare and foal turnout must have exceptionally safe fencing – post and rail is ideal. Electric fencing is not recommended for foals." If the weather is mild and temperate, and the mare and foal are in strong, good health, they may start to live out. "We check them in the field several times a day and handle the foal often," adds Tessa.

Foaling heat

Between six and 10 days after foaling, the mare will have a foal heat. During this time, the mare's hormones alter the nutritional make-up of her milk and foals will often have upset stomachs and diarrhoea. The foal will need to be washed so the delicate skin under his tail and around his bottom does not burn. This is another opportunity to handle the foal. Many studs apply liquid paraffin, Vaseline or Sudocrem after cleaning so the diarrhoea does not stick to the skin.

Farrier training

Handling the legs and feet is an important stage in your foal's training and development. Running your hands down their legs and picking up feet can be part of their handling routine, starting within a few days of being born. Be mindful that the foal is just starting to work out how to balance and only hold the hoof for short periods of time. Unless your vet advises against it, foals can have their first farrier visit at four weeks.

Food, rest and warmth

Foals are vulnerable in their first days and weeks of life, as a result of their fragile immune systems and their tendency to exhaust themselves with bursts of activity. They need to feed and rest in regular intervals – some may feed as often as every 20–30 minutes. Foals also struggle to cope with extremes of temperature and can easily become chilled in windy, wet or cool weather, or dehydrated from the heat or sun. Circumstances change quickly with foals, and it is a balance of monitoring them closely and not disturbing precious bonding time between the mare and her foal.











1 Practice the leading formation in the foaling box
Everyone needs to communicate and work together. Here, a few practice laps of the foaling box ensures mare, foal and handlers are working as a team.

2 Mare and foal head to the paddock
One handler leads the mare and one handler follows with the foal, cuddling their arm around the chest to help with steering. One person stays slightly back of the action in case the foal needs encouragement.

3 The foal stands (a) while the mare handler opens the gate (b).

4 Foal chaos!
The foal leaps in the air as she goes through the gate (a), slips and the handler (correctly) lets go. The others calmly close the gate while the foal cavorts around the mare (b).

5 Catching the foal
The foal is approached slowly and calmly, from the opposite side of the mare, so that if the foal spooks and runs off, it is towards the mare.

6 *See overleaf for steps 6 and 7*

Before going anywhere with a mare and foal, make sure your route is safe and free from yard traffic or dogs

Foal-health checklist
There are several items on a foal-health checklist to ensure they get the best possible start in life...

- Evaluate the stickiness of a mare's colostrum. Thick colostrum can be an indicator of the quality and density of antibodies it contains to help protect the newborn foal against disease.
- Ensure the mare and foal rise shortly after foaling, the foal feeds and the mare passes the afterbirth.
- Examine or save the placenta to determine whether it is intact and to ensure nothing is left inside to cause an infection in the mare.
- Spray the navel with oxytetracycline (sourced from your vet in advance, usually blue or purple spray) or diluted iodine, several times a day to prevent infection.
- Vet visit usually within 12 hours of foaling. Foals are injected with a tetanus antitoxin and a blood sample is taken for an on-site IgG test to check the ability of blood to clot and the level of infection-fighting antibodies the foal should have received in the colostrum.
- The foal passes meconium – hard, pelleted manure – before he starts to pass yellowish, soft, milk manure.

Spraying the navel
Anne Dicker, manager at Catherston Stud, says: "Iodine spray smells funny and foals don't like it. Getting to the underside of the foal to inspect and spray his navel several times a day is difficult enough without him dreading and reacting to a strong odour. So I prefer to use a blue or purple spray, as the foals don't seem to mind the smell, and the bright colour means it's easy to tell that you have covered the entire area and not missed anything."

Conformation difficulties
A foal spends much of his gestation period with bent legs in the increasingly cramped quarters of the mare's uterus. It's not uncommon for a foal to be born with contracted or slack tendons. Both conditions usually improve greatly within a few weeks of controlled exercise (not galloping around the paddock), with specialist veterinary and/or farrier attention.

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6 Releasing the foal
Always release the foal first, taking care to remain with him for a few seconds after you have removed the foal slip. This helps teach the foal not to tear away once he feels the slip coming off.

7 Releasing the mare
Many studs leave safe, breakable headcollars on the broodmares while turned out. Once the foal is free, unclip the mare and step away.



Safe snacking

"The best advice I can give owners is that their foal is not a doll or a toy, he's a horse," says Tessa. "Behaviour that seems harmless in a foal, like play rearing, head-butting or searching pockets can have drastic consequences when the horse reaches maturity. And don't feed treats, which only leads to nipping, biting and generally poor manners, which can be dangerous."

Catherston Stud Manager, Anne, agrees: "We make sure that the young horses we deal with respect humans and give us space to work safely from the outset. This can be as simple as asking the youngster to take a step back when we enter the field or stable, so we have room to get in, turn around and close the gate or door without having to defend our pockets or be pestered for treats. When we are mucking out, they must move around politely and not climb all over you – a horse could easily hurt himself on the tools or the wheelbarrow.

"There are many occasions when it is appropriate to reward your youngster, and I encourage handlers and riders to do so. He will understand he has done well with a scratch on the withers or a kind word in a voice he understands," Anne advises.

Social skills

Anne and Tessa agree that the best situation for foals is growing and developing in the company of their peers – other growing yongsters.

Their characters and personalities blossom as they interact with foals of a similar age and size, and they learn important social skills and necessary rules of horsey engagement. Foals naturally challenge themselves as they explore and play, and having companions takes some of the responsibility to entertain the foal away from the mare.

Anne explains: "Watching them together, you quickly see which foals have more dominant natures, often leading and instigating play, while others are content further down in the hierarchy. Being out with other foals also helps them form social bonds independent from their dam, which makes it's easier for them when the time comes for weaning."

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See page 118 for Spillers' feeding tip of the month

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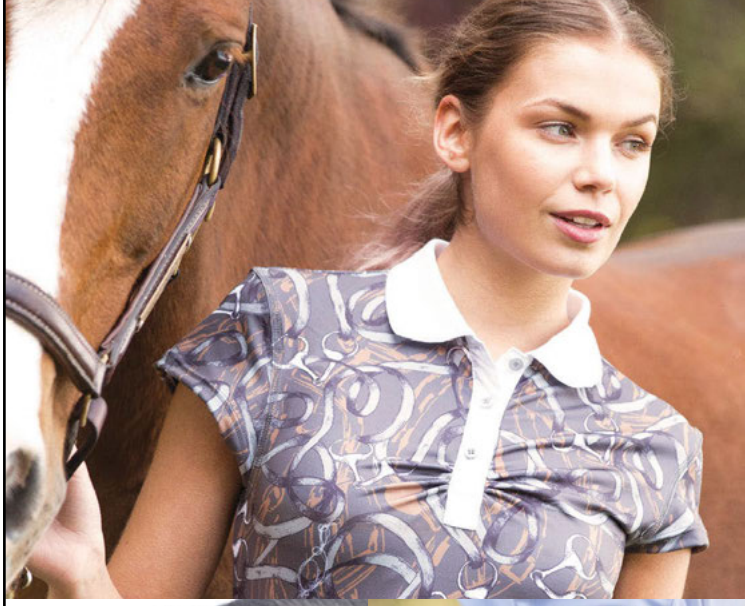
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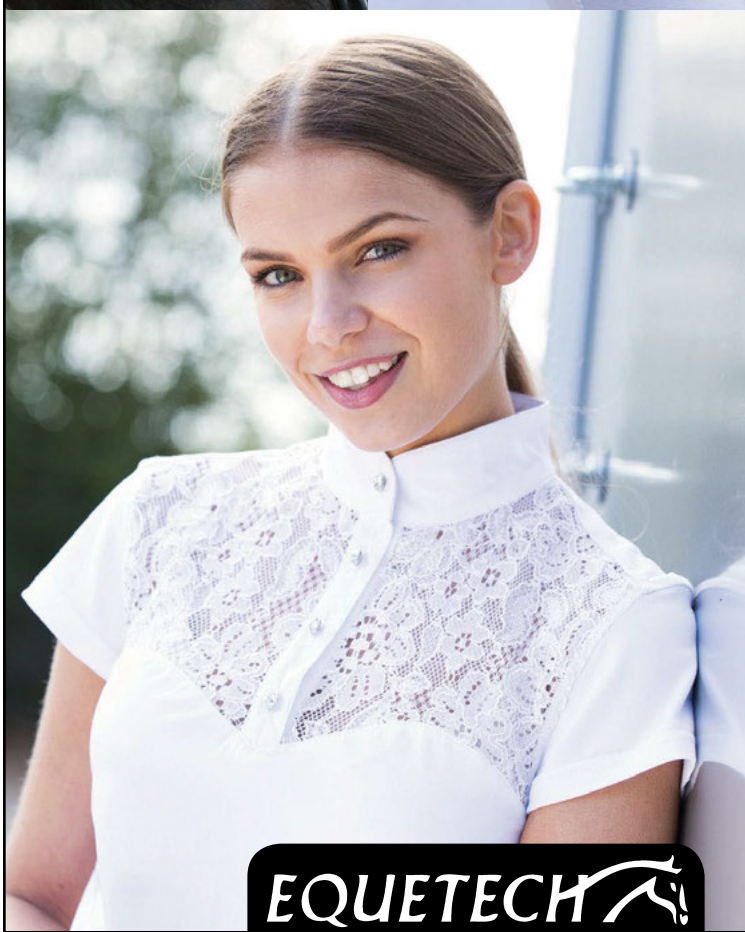
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Wellbeing news

{ NEWS SPECIAL }

Way to worm

The need to change our worming strategy isn't a new idea, but are we starting to get to grips with it? A recent survey of nearly 1,000 horse owners conducted by Countrywide, in collaboration with Westgate Laboratories and BW Equine Vets, suggests there's still a lot of work to be done. The results highlight the disparities in current practice against expert advice, and how horse owners' behaviour is leading to a rise in resistance to wormers.

Resistance, caused by the overuse of wormers, poses a significant risk to the health and wellbeing of our horses. Regular faecal worm egg counts (FWECs) are the best way to prevent resistance developing, because they enable owners to worm only when necessary (when the results show a horse is carrying a worm burden above 200 eggs per gramme of faeces). And yet, according to the survey, 59% of owners are not following this route, instead continuing to worm in the traditional way, routinely at set times of the year.

The survey showed that only 31% of respondents conduct FWECs. And while 67% said they believed that they were protecting their horses from a rise in resistance, only 19% followed best practice and carried out enough FWECs each year. Experts advise a minimum of three FWEC tests per year, with any horse who has a positive FWEC test being treated, then tested again after worming to ensure the wormer was effective and identify any resistance to the wormer used. However, 81% of respondents were not following this advice.

Encysted small redworm and tapeworm are not picked up in FWECs, and present a real risk to horses. Tests



are available for tapeworm, but not for encysted small redworm, so owners should speak to their vet or a Suitably Qualified Person (SQP) to develop an individual plan because treatment depends on pasture management regimes, worm burden and the activity of the individual horses grazing the land.

Another important factor in the rise in resistance is inaccurate dosing. Giving your horse too little wormer could result in failure to kill the entire worm burden, whereas over-dosing could encourage resistance. Yet 38% of respondents didn't know the weight of their horse, so this is also of concern.

The message from the survey is clear: if we're going to be able to protect our horses from worms for years to come, more of us need to change our worming habits to limit wormer resistance. There is plenty of expert advice available, so owners need to take a responsible and educated approach for the long-term welfare of our equine friends. You can read the full results at countrywidefarmers.co.uk/equestrian

{ RESEARCH }



Better out than in

Many young, growing performance horses are stabled before yearling sales or starting training, but it is thought that moving these youngsters from paddocks to stabling could slow down the rate of bone formation due to decreased physical activity. To test this theory, a study was conducted at Michigan State University, in the USA.

Sixteen Arab yearlings around 18 months old were split into two groups – one housed in stables and the other kept out at grass. X-rays were taken of each left foreleg every 28 days to measure bone density. After 84 days, six horses from each group were randomly selected to complete 56 days of training.

The X-rays showed that the stabled horses had a decrease in bone density, while the pasture-kept horses had greater bone density. The training period did not appear to alleviate the negative effects of stabling on bone formation. This suggests that pasture-kept horses may have a skeletal structure that is better prepared for training and competition.

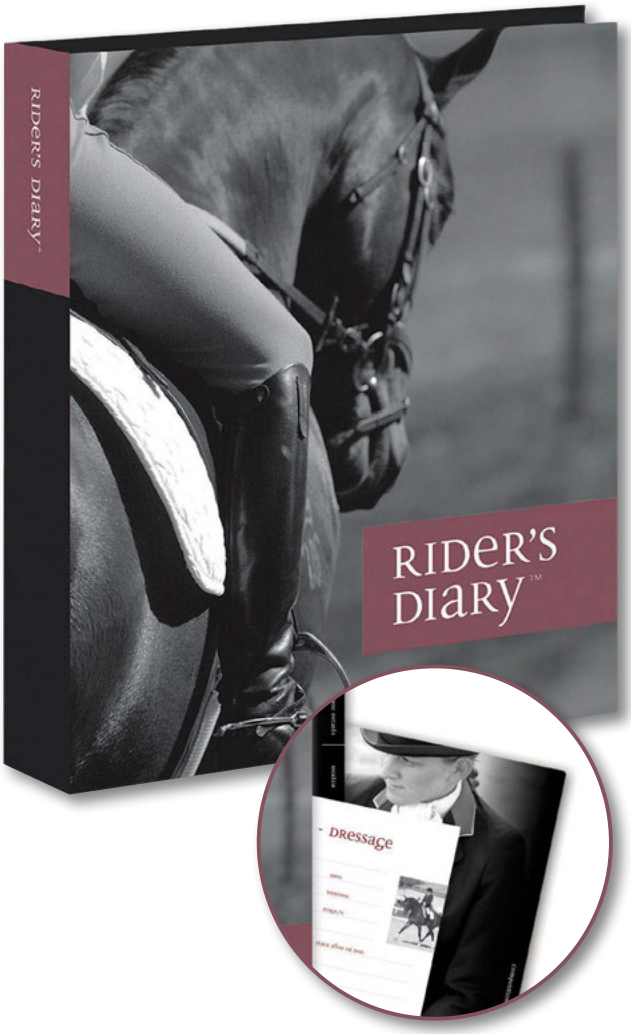
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Horse AND Rider

HORSEY SHOPPING



Paws for thought

Hacking with your dog safely, plus the latest products for your pooch

The complete buyer's guide for horse and rider

Get a grip

Our expert panel puts 15 of the best reins on the market to the test

In addition

Helping you choose the right all-purpose supplement for your horse

This month we love...

A super-strong fly sheet, funky gilet, grooming essentials and more

SHOW MIX

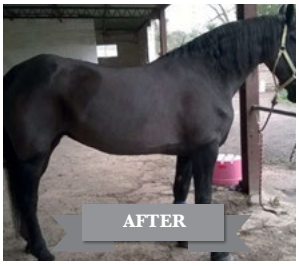
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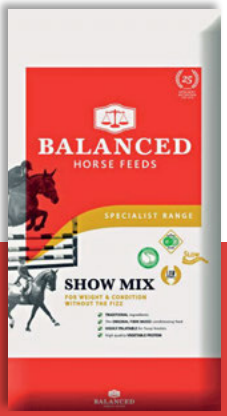
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OUR TESTERS

The up-and-coming showjumping riders from the JB Academy, coached by Johnathan Bowman, kindly tested our reins.

Great lengths

The length and width of rein to choose will vary depending on your horse's length of neck and your personal preferences. If you're jumping, you may prefer a shorter rein to avoid getting your foot caught in the reins' loop. And if you have a double bridle, thinner reins are more comfortable in your hand. Typical rein length is 48in (122cm) for pony, 52in (132cm) for cob, and 54–58in (137–148cm) for full. Rein widths can vary between ½in, ⅝in or ¾in.



Bridleway Melton rubber reins

Flexible grip with all the benefits of quality, vegetable-dyed leather. Includes leather martingale stops and hook stud billets.
PROS: "These are flexible and grippy – even in the rain. I like the martingale stops as my horse uses a running martingale for jumping."
CONS: "None."
COLOURS: Havana or black
SIZES: ⅝in or ¾in. Full
RRP £17.95
0845 2419970
bridlewayequestrian.com

Caldene supergrip reins

Made from vegetable-tanned leather that is eco-friendly, strong and supple.
PROS: "Grippy, continental-style reins with rubber woven in, good for dry weather and using with gloves."
CONS: "The rubber isn't as grippy in wet conditions as they are when dry."
COLOURS: Havana or black
SIZES: ⅜in. Pony, cob or full
RRP £22.49
01274 711101
caldene.co.uk

Collegiate rubber reins

Made from European leather with stainless steel fittings.
PROS: "Very grippy rubber reins that don't slip through my hands when riding my strong horse."
CONS: "None."
COLOURS: Black or brown
SIZES: Pony or full
RRP £24.99



BUY IF...
you want a pair of reins for showing or quiet hacking

Cottage Craft plain reins

Smooth leather reins that are stylish, durable and ideal for showing.
PROS: "A good price for a nice pair of reins for showing or quiet hacking."
CONS: "They're smooth, so they don't have a great grip if your horse is strong."
COLOURS: Havana or black
SIZES: ½in or ⅝in. Pony or full
RRP £16.50
01274 711101
cottagecraft.co.uk

BUY IF...
you want a good-looking pair of reins at a great price for summer riding

Fouganza Romeo reins

Web and rubber reins with raised, fancy-stitched bit ends. Includes leather martingale stops.
PROS: "I like how supple these reins are and the stitching detail on the padded leather bit end. The wing-shaped martingale rein stops are a great feature."
CONS: "The grip is fine with bare hands, but isn't as good with gloves."
COLOURS: Brown or black
SIZES: 2cm. Full
RRP £9.99
decathlon.co.uk

BUY IF...
you want a nice pair of reins for your double bridle, showing or everyday use

GFS insider grip reins

Rubber on the inside of the rein gives discreet grip, ideal for showing.
PROS: "They aren't too bulky and provide good grip, even in the rain."
CONS: "None."
COLOURS: Havana or black
SIZES: ½in or ⅝in. Full
RRP £29.99
gfsriding.co.uk



Double-layered English leather ends with hook studs, leather martingale stops and a fine layer of rubber interwoven with the webbing to provide extra grip.
PROS: "I love the leather grips as they help me keep a consistent contact on the reins."
CONS: "None."
COLOURS: Brown or black
SIZE: 5/8in. Full
RRP £60
01239 614648
thermatex.co.uk

Soft rubber reins reinforced with nylon, with snap hooks at the ends.
PROS: "Very flexible grip and I love the clips on the ends for ease of use."
CONS: "It would be great if they came in different lengths."
Colours: Black or brown
SIZE: 5/8in. Cob
RRP £21.99
horze.co.uk

Continental webbed reins with leather grips and billet hook fastening.
PROS: "Nice, basic reins at a good price."
CONS: "The leather is slightly stiff when attaching the reins to the bit."
COLOURS: Black or brown
SIZES: ½in pony or 5/8in full
RRP £11
01522 529206
battles.co.uk



Made in Britain, these traditional reins are made to stand the test of time.
PROS: "These reins are well-made and designed to last."
CONS: "None."
COLOUR: Havana
SIZES: ½in, ⅝in or ¾in. Full
RRP £64.11
ejeffries.co.uk

Rubber grip over internal webbing for strength. Pre-oiled leather with martingale stops, and stainless steel buckles and billets.
PROS: "They are very flexible in my hands and a bit shorter than my other reins, so great for jumping."
CONS: "None."
COLOURS: Black or brown
SIZES: 1cm pony or 2cm cob/full
RRP £31.95
01303 872277
wefi.co.uk

English leather with black rubber grip and brass buckles.
PROS: "They really stand out against my horse and have been much admired. They're just the right width and thickness for my hand."
CONS: "None."
COLOURS: Red, black or brown
SIZES: 2cm. Pony, cob or full
RRP £30
johnwhitakerintltd.com



Kincade soft padded reins

BUY IF... you want affordable reins for schooling, hacking and jumping

Traditionally-styled reins with leather martingale stops.
PROS: "These reins are very soft on my hands and I love the style of the martingale stops."
CONS: "The design is great for schooling, but I probably wouldn't compete with them."
COLOURS: Black or brown
SIZE: 48in
RRP £24.99

Silver Crown flexible reins

BUY IF... you want a premium pair of rubber reins

Made from internally-reinforced rubber with martingale stops and stainless steel fittings.
PROS: "These are very good quality and have a unique finish with white stitching. They're easy to hold and flexible."
CONS: "They're a premium product at a premium price."
COLOURS: Black with white stitching, black with black stitching, nut with white stitching, nut with nut stitching or conker with white stitching
SIZE: Pony/cob or cob/full
RRP £68
01628 302301
shadowhorse.co.uk

Vespucci hand grip rubber reins

BUY IF... you want rubber reins with leather grips for showjumping or eventing

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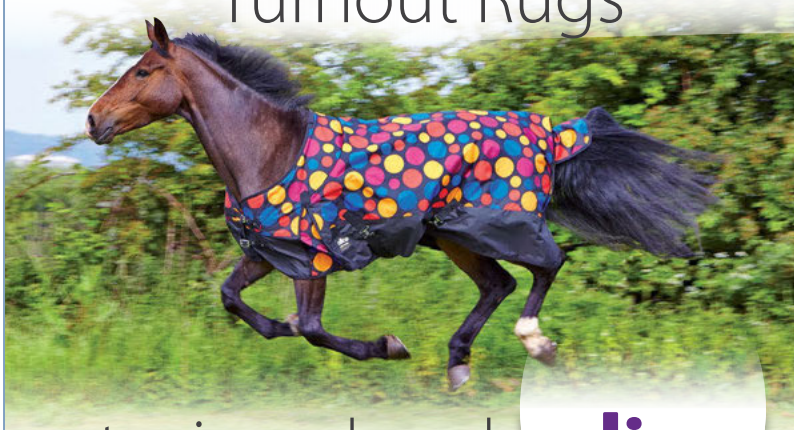
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BUYER'S GUIDE

IN ADDITION+

Looking for an all-round supplement for your horse, but baffled by the choice? Horse&Rider *rounds up the broad-spectrum supplements on the market*

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baileyshorsefeeds.co.uk

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horseandponydirect.com

7 NAF In the Pink Powder
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naf-equine.eu/uk





8 Equine America EVERYDAY Vitamin & Mineral Supplement

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equine-america.co.uk

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nupafeed.co.uk

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pegasushealth.com

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saracenhorsefeeds.com

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gwfnutrition.com

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kmeliteproducts.co.uk

19 Lincoln Platinum Pro Complete Vitamins & Minerals

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lincoln-equestrian.com

20 Benevit Advance

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feedmark.com

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lifedatalabs.co.uk

22 Blue Chip Original

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bluechipfeed.com

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dodsonandhorrell.com

24 Nettex All Purpose Vits & Mins

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01634 257150
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Paws for thought

Hacking out with your dog can be brilliant – or a bit of a 'mare. Horse&Rider *helps make it safe and fun for all of you*

You're setting off for a hack on a beautiful morning. Your horse is striding out happily, your dog running alongside, both excited but listening to you, too. It's amazing, really – they are behavioural opposites – canine predator, equine prey. In the wild, one would chase the other and listening to us would be the last thing they'd do. Their senses would be fully focused on the chase and they would be literally deaf to our commands. So how do we get from the latter state to the former?

If you've always had dogs and horses on your yard, you shouldn't have too many problems. But what if you have a new, excitable puppy or an older dog you want to introduce, or a young horse who's never seen dogs before or even one who's scared of them? You employ a slow process of habituation – in other words, gradually getting them used to each other.



Top tips

- Build your dog's fitness slowly for hacking. He'll love it, but the fun of running and trying to keep up with you will override any discomfort he might experience.
- It's hot work for dogs in summer, so take care of them – especially shorter-nosed breeds and those with heavy coats. Take water with you, have regular breaks and don't exercise in the heat of day.

Words: Alison Bridge. Photos: Bob Atkins. Many thanks to Claire Stallard of the Blue Cross for her help with this feature, bit.ly/dogsandhorses

Introductions...

Dog to horse

Use a calm horse experienced with dogs if you're introducing a puppy to equines, and enlist a friend who can handle your horse competently.

1 Make sure your dog is well-exercised and focused on you. Take him for a walk and then do some obedience work with him before you start his introduction-to-horses training. You want your dog to be calm, so use treats rather than play as his reward. 'High value' treats like chicken or cheese will ensure he really focuses on you, but if they make him too excited, use not-so-tasty rewards.

2 Have an assistant stand with your horse in a bridle in-hand or mounted, in a paddock or arena with rails to act as a barrier.

3 With your dog on a collar or harness and lead, approach the arena, but ask him to sit or lie down when you're still a good distance away from your horse and reward him when he focuses on you.



4 If he looks from your horse to you, that's great – reward him. It's fine for him to be interested, but he should not be excited and should be more interested in you. If he gets over-excited or too interested – he may stare at your horse – move further away until his focus is on you.



5 Once you have your dog's focus and he's not too excited, move a few steps closer to your horse, then ask him to sit and reward him when he focuses on you.

6 Carry on in this way, but don't rush and don't train for too long – 10 to 15 minutes is plenty. Finish your first session with everyone calm and your dog thinking the canine equivalent of , 'It's just a horse, Mum is much more interesting!'.

➤ Repeat the session a couple of days later and then a few more times, so your dog has time to take his training in. Eventually, he should be standing by your horse calmly and listen when you give him a command.



Introductions...

Horse to dog

Use a sensible, equine-friendly dog with your young or inexperienced horse and a friend who can handle the dog well.

1 Before you start your dog familiarisation training session, school your horse so he's not fresh, concentrating and really listening to you. You can do this training while riding if you feel comfortable and in control, or with your horse in-hand, on the lunge or in long reins if you feel that will be safer. A pocketful of food is also very handy with a horse whose attention you need to capture – just a couple of high-fibre nuts will distract most horses from moderately distracting or scary things.

2 Introduce the dog, again with rails in between them. Carry on schooling your horse, at walk preferably, circling at the end furthest away from the dog and giving him lots to think about, such as transitions and turns to keep his focus on you.

3 When your horse is happy with the dog outside the fence, ask the handler to bring him inside and stay absolutely still. Circle at the opposite end then gradually move the edge of the circle closer – your horse should not react. If he does, take him further away to a distance he's comfortable with and finish on a good note.

➤ Repeat your horse's 10–15 minute training session a couple of days later and then a few more times, bringing him calmly closer so eventually he is completely relaxed while standing by the dog.



Hacking with your dog

To accompany you on rides safely, your dog must be calm around horses (see p140) and also obedient to commands such as 'sit', 'stay', 'heel', 'come' and 'wait'.

It's a good idea to practise jogging, running or cycling with him before you hack with him so he gets used to accompanying you at a higher speed off the lead, rather than being excited by the movement. It will also let you practise training your dog without having to worry about your horse at the same time.

For your first ride, ask a friend to accompany you with your dog on a loose lead alongside you and your horse. Talk to him from your horse, praise him for being calm and reward him when he obeys your commands – throw him a few tasty treats. Carry on doing this, gradually going for longer rides until you feel confident you can control your dog alone.

When you venture out just the three of you together, try to stay to the same, off-road route you took before to start with.



It's a good idea to practise running or cycling with your dog before you hack

Road work

It's not a great idea to take your dog hacking with you on roads, but sometimes you may need to use them to access bridleways.

If you can't avoid it, you will need to ensure your dog is on a lead before taking him onto the road, because it is against the law for dogs to be off the lead on a public highway. It's not recommended to lead your dog from your horse, so you should dismount and lead your horse from the off side, so you are between him and the traffic.

If you must take your dog on the road, ensure he is wearing hi-vis, too – there are lightweight coats and LED collars available to ensure he is easily visible.

Worst case scenarios

What should you do if a scary or over-excited dog comes at you and your dog out hacking? Stay as calm as you can. If you panic and seem frightened, your horse and your dog will pick up on it and get more worried or excited. Slow down your pace and hopefully the owner will gain control of the dog, then wait until he's back on the lead before you pass.

If you have dogs, young riders or horses with you, move between them and the scary dog. Talk to an aggressive or excited dog in a firm but calm way. Don't try to outrun it – fast movement activates a dog's chase instinct and you may trigger a grab or bite. It's better to wait for the owner to arrive or for the dog to lose interest, which will probably happen after a while.



Top tip

➤ Always carry a leadrope and dog lead when out hacking with your dog. It's much easier to lead your horse by a rope than reins, especially if you need to hold onto your dog, too.

Reduce your risks

- School your horse on a hack – do transitions, a little flexion or leg-yield to keep his attention so he's not half asleep if something happens suddenly.
- Avoid popular beauty spots at school holiday times and sunny weekends.
- Wear hi-vis so dog owners can see you coming from further away.
- Alert dog owners to your presence – call if you are behind them.

Products for pooches













1 VioVet Joint Force
Supplement to help support active joints, whatever your dog's age and lifestyle.
RRP from £13.99
jointforce.co.uk

2 John Whitaker International Britannia dog bed
Soft and comfortable, it's perfect for the patriotic pooch.
RRP from £26
johnwhitaker.com

3 Back on Track mesh rug
The Welltex technology is perfect for keeping your dog warm when he's been out in the rain.
RRP from £47.90
backontrack.com/uk

4 Forthglade Natural Lifestage
A complete, wet dog food range for puppies, adults and seniors.
RRP from 70p
forthglade.com

5 Boot Buddy
Protect the back of your car and keep your pooches comfortable, too.
RRP from £24.99
boot-buddy.com

6 VIP LED flashing harness
Your dog will be easy to spot in this reflective harness with flashing LED lights.
RRP from £18.99
highvisibility.uk.com





7 Retired Greyhound Trust leather collars

Securely fits the neck of a Greyhound, giving you extra control on walks.

RRP £10.50

retiredgreyhoundshop.co.uk

8 Petiquette collars

Specify exactly what you want, from custom sizes to Swarovski crystals.

RRP from £20

petiquettecollars.co.uk

9 Barrier natural flea and tick spray

The entirely natural ingredients help to protect against fleas and ticks on small pets, including dogs.

RRP £8.15

flyrepel.com

10 AnimAlarm

This portable alarm sends a text when the room temperature rises too high.

RRP £107.99

theanimalarm.com

11 Green and Wilds antler dog chews

Ideal for keeping your dog content while you attend to your other four-legged friend.

RRP from £3.09

greenandwilds.co.uk

12 Barjo dog ramp

The skid-resistant tread helps your dog into your vehicle and folds for easy storage.

RRP from £65

barjo.co.uk

13 FOXY fox poo odour eliminator

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This month we love...

Check out our pick of great horsey stuff this month



The **Airowear BodyBase Pro** combines a base layer with shoulder protection and can be worn with any style of riding clothes.

Sizes: XS–XL
RRP £100
(Two base layers and one pair of shoulder pads – all items sold separately)
01434 632816
airowear.co.uk

> *Treat yourself to something warm and stylish this spring*

Containing six different active ingredients to promote health and mobility, **Lincoln Platinum Pro Flex Joints** can be used as an early step to support horses suffering with underlying joint problems, or those prone to stiffness.

RRP £24.99 for 1.65kg
01522 529206



Stylish and light, the **Equistead Esperado Tracy Gilet** helps you to look your best with a flattering, fitted shape. Zip-up pockets make it functional and funky.

Colours: Blue or pink
Sizes: S–L
RRP £72
01189 587524
equistead.com



“Give your horse his own spring clean”

Available in powder and liquid forms, **Nettex Advanced Joint & Muscle Maintenance** powder and liquid can be fed to horses and ponies of all ages to help maintain healthy joints and muscles.

RRP £32.99 for 1kg and 1L
01634 257150
nettexequine.com





Show Off shampoo, Muck Off stain remover, Shine On grooming spray, and Pimp my Pony shampoo combine as the **NAF Fab Four**. Removing dirt and stains, detangling and enhancing shine, they give a perfect finish for the show ring.

RRP £7.99 (Show Off, Muck Off and Pimp my Pony) and £9.99 (Shine On)
01600 710732
naf-equine.eu/uk

Dengie Healthy Hooves Molasses Free complete fibre feed has a high-fibre and low-sugar content, ideal for horses and ponies at rest or in light work.

RRP from £12.79 for 20kg
0845 3455115
dengie.com



Tried & tested

Leovet 5-Star detangler

RRP £9.95 for 750ml
028 38314570
leovet.de/en



PROS: “The spray left my horse’s mane and tail completely detangled, silky and very shiny! I would buy this product again as it was so good.”
CONS: “None.”
BUY IF... your horse has an unruly mane or tail that needs to be kept knot-free.

Tried & tested

Pesky Pest shampoo and conditioner (Especially for dogs)

RRP from £4.95 for 250ml
01953 456363
barrier-biotech.com



PROS: “It smells very fresh and stopped my dog scratching straightaway – she suffers from dry, itchy skin. This kept her skin and coat in great condition and it didn’t need to be rinsed off, which was great! Amazing value for money.”
CONS: “None.”
BUY IF... your dog has dry, itchy skin to keep him in great condition all year round.



Colour contrasting **Toggi Eridge two-tone jodhpurs** are made from a super-stretchy, hardwearing fabric for good shape retention.

Colours: Cabernet/navy or black/slate
Sizes: 24–34ins
RRP from £35
0113 2707000
toggi.com



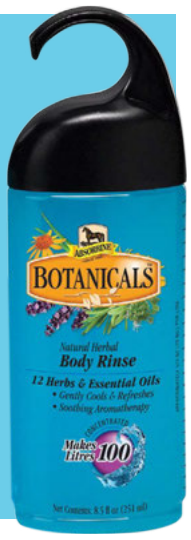
Practical but stylish, the **Woof Wear Paddock boot** features a smooth full-grain leather outer and luxurious insole for all-day comfort. Functional details include the heavy duty zip, elasticated gusset, spur rest and pull-on tab.

Colour: Black
Sizes: 38–43
RRP £80
woofwear.com



Absorbine Botanicals body rinse leaves the coat with a healthy shine, and cools sore muscles and tendons. The hook is perfect for hanging and the measuring guide on the side of the bottle helps reduce waste.

RRP £19.95 for 251ml
absorbine.com



A good choice for a rug wrecker, the **WeatherBeeta Ripshield Plus Combo** fly rug provides summer protection from insects and flies. It features a combo neck, a full wrap tail flap, adjustable chest straps, cross surcingles and removable leg straps.

Colour: White/navy/grey
Sizes: 4ft–7ft 3ins
RRP £69.99
weatherbeeta.co.uk

Tried & tested

horseandponydirect.com Insect Away

RRP £6.99
0844 2472144
horseandponydirect.com



PROS: "I felt this was really good value for money compared to others on the market. What makes it different is the nozzle – it produces a fine mist that covers a large area. The spray is very quiet, so horses don't jump as they do with some sprays and I could use it on my mare when I normally have to apply spray with a cloth."
CONS: "It's not great to apply in strong winds – but flies don't generally bother horses in the wind so it's not really an issue."
BUY IF... you need to get rid of pesky flies on a horse who hates harsh sprays.

Tried & tested

Hunter Adjustable Norris boots

Sizes: 3–12
RRP from £95
0330 3334290
hunterboots.com



PROS: "I felt on-trend in these boots and they are also incredibly comfortable. I love the way I can let them out at the top to accommodate my wide calf without them looking too tight for me. The classic green colour goes with everything – my riding gear and my casuals."
CONS: "None."
BUY IF... you're out and about all day from saddle to street.

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20 to win! Keep Calm

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For more information, call 01371 850247 or visit baileyshorsefeeds.co.uk

2 to win! Cool head

Two lucky readers will each win their choice of a **Champion Ventair skull cap** worth up to £107.50 or a **Champion Ventair riding hat** worth up to £124.50. They feature a ventilated system to increase airflow, helping to keep your head cool.

Each winner will be fitted for their Champion Ventair in their local Champion stockist.



For more information, call 0113 2707000 or visit championhats.co.uk

1 to win! Supplement savvy

One lucky winner will win over 11kg of supplements from the new **Lincoln Platinum supplement range**, worth £200. Included is Pro 5 Mag Calmer syringe (RRP £6.50) and powder (RRP £24.99), Pro Breathe Respiratory (RRP £24.99), Pro Complete Vitamins and Minerals (RRP £14.99), two tubs of Pro Flex Joints (RRP £24.99 each), Ultimate Flex Performance Joints (RRP £54.99) and a Pro Hoof Fit (RRP £24.99).



For more information, call 01522 529206

14 to win! Fly away

Fourteen lucky readers will win a 300ml bottle of Flint's Yard midge repellent lotion, Itching?, worth £14.95 each. Itching? is a 100% natural midge repellent lotion with a cooling aloe vera base. Once applied, it dries transparent and non-sticky, and it is designed to easily dilute into a spray.



For more information, call 01548 521777 or visit flintsyard.com

To enter, complete the form on page 160 or visit horseandridercompetitions.co.uk
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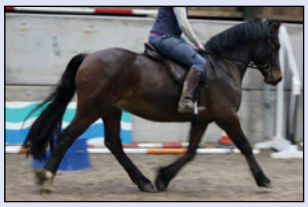
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andrea-cameron@live.co.uk



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Substantial TB mare

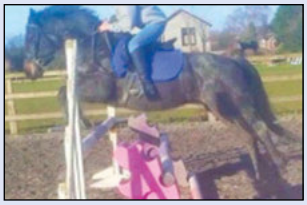
● **16.2hh,** TB mare, 10 yrs. Ruby is sound, viceless, easy and uncomplicated both ridden and on the ground. Has three good paces, fit and ready to go. Has competed PC, DR, SJ and eventing. Genuine reason for sale, open to vet and realistic offers. £4,000.
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● **14.2hh,** cob mare, 6 yrs. Sweet mare who loves her job, forward-going but very safe. Hacks alone or in company, schools well and jumps, has done PC activites. £1,500.
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● **11.2hh,** Welsh Section A gelding, 5 yrs. Broken in last summer, has hacked, jumped and schooled. Not a novice ride as still quite young. Suited to a confident little jockey. POA.
07966 517603 (Powys)



● **13hh,** gelding, 9 yrs. Been there and done it, has done PC and SJ. Fun, forward-going pony. Good to do in all ways, lovely boy with real character. £2,000.
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● **16hh,** WB mare, 17 yrs. Fantastic all-rounder who never lets you down. Very loving and reponds to voice when riding and handling. Very sad sale. £1,200.
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07891 894865 (Derbyshire)



● **15hh,** Welsh Section D gelding, 7 yrs. Absolutely fabulous, lovely boy with manners to burn. Confidence-giving, calm, comfortable horse. Superbly bred. £1,750.
07702 162864 (Bucks)



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Arenas can be built on most sites, although it's best to choose a flat area because it will keep the cost of groundworks to a minimum. A sloping site will increase the amount of groundwork needed, affecting the build time and cost.

When thinking of where would be best to site an arena, as well as regular access for use (close to your stables is likely to be best), you need to consider how delivery vehicles will access the site. Materials will be delivered in large loads, meaning narrow lanes or gates can be a problem.

Drainage is an important part of the construction of an arena. It's ideal if there is a natural drainage point such as a ditch, but a soakaway can be built to suit the drainage system.

You will require planning permission to install an arena, but don't be put off by the paperwork involved – most companies that specialise in arena construction will deal with a planning application. If you want to complete your own planning application, your Local Planning Authority (LPA) can advise you, including specific conditions that may apply in your area. Call them sooner rather than later to get the process moving.

It's important to engage a contractor and finalise your arena construction, size and surface before applying for planning permission. If you wish to install arena mirrors or lighting – even at a later date – ensuring they're on your initial plans will save you time in the long run.

Planning permission requests can create bad feeling between neighbours. Be proactive not reactive, and speak to neighbours and anyone with a direct view of the proposed site to explain your plans and discuss them.

If you already have an arena, you don't require planning permission for normal refurbishment, such as resurfacing it. However, any extensions to the size, or changes to fencing or lighting will entail a planning application.

With thanks to Clarke Equine Services for their help with this feature, clarkeequineservices.co.uk

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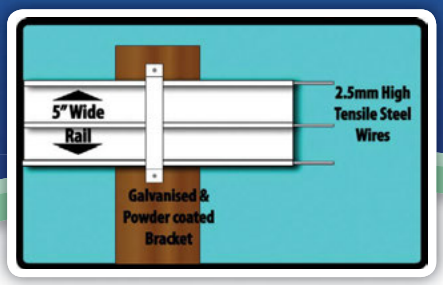


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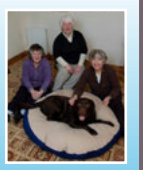
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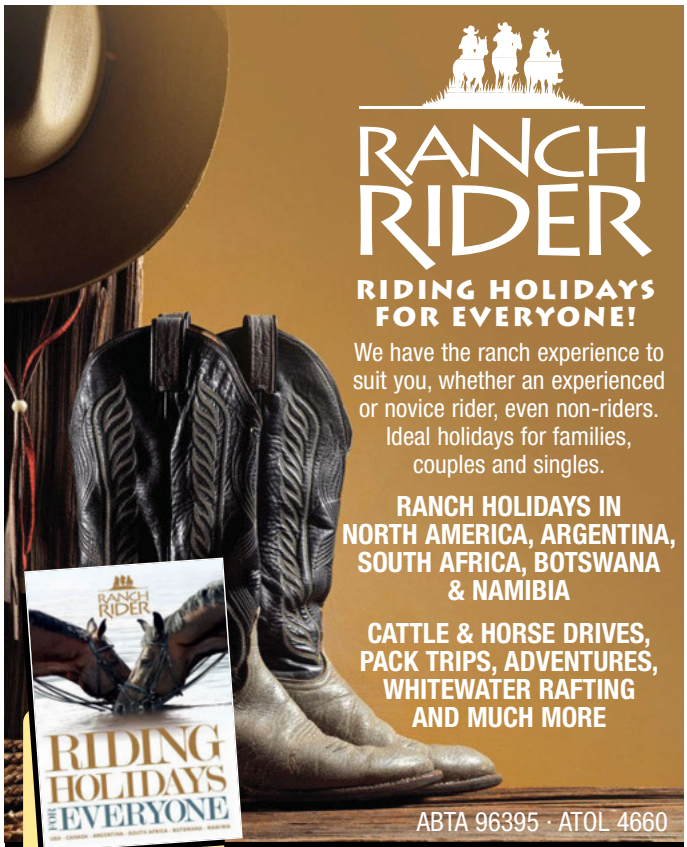


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With your consent, D J Murphy (Publishers) Ltd may pass your details on to the prize provider of this competition, Dodson & Horrell, so that they can keep you up to date with news and offers. Please tick here if you are happy for us to pass your details on ❑

Question How long has Dodson & Horrell been making feed?

Tie-breaker Tell us why you should win the visit to Richard's yard. (max 50 words)

.....

.....

.....

.....

Page 148 Perfect prizes! (Tick which you'd like to win)

❑ **BHAPR/15 Baileys Keep Calm**
With your consent, D J Murphy (Publishers) Ltd may pass your details on to the prize provider of this competition, Baileys Horse Feeds, so that they can keep you up to date with news and offers. Please tick here if you are happy for us to pass your details on ❑

❑ **CHAPR/15 Champion Ventair skull cap/riding hat**
With your consent, D J Murphy (Publishers) Ltd may pass your details on to the prize provider of this competition, Champion Hats, so that they can keep you up to date with news and offers. Please tick here if you are happy for us to pass your details on ❑

❑ **LSAPR/15 Lincoln Platinum supplement range**
With your consent, D J Murphy (Publishers) Ltd may pass your details on to the prize provider of this competition, Lincoln, so that they can keep you up to date with news and offers. Please tick here if you are happy for us to pass your details on ❑

❑ **FYAPR/15 Flint's Yard Insect Repellent Lotion – Itching?**
With your consent, D J Murphy (Publishers) Ltd may pass your details on to the prize provider of this competition, Flint's Yard, so that they can keep you up to date with news and offers. Please tick here if you are happy for us to pass your details on ❑

Question Baileys Keep Calm is designed to soak into a mash in how many minutes?

.....

Tie-breaker If you could have lunch with any top rider, who would it be and why? (max 50 words)

.....

.....

.....

Your details

Title (Mr/Mrs/Miss/Ms)
Name
Address
.....
Postcode Country
Date of birth Daytime tel no
Email

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My life with horses



Emma Taylor

Clocking up the miles driving around the country, Emma Taylor spends her week introducing business people to the advantages of corporate leadership development with horses

Emma Taylor, The Leadership Whisperers, Warwickshire

Emma works with businesses using horses to help leaders and executives develop powerful relationships and communication skills. In her spare time, she enjoys classical riding and dressage.

Monday



Today I'm at The Horse Trust in Buckinghamshire, running a retreat for a group of MDs and CEOs. We have the privilege of working with some of the retired horses from the Army, Mounted Police and Royal Mews who are now residents at the charity, and who bring all their experience and wisdom to the group. Plus, there's just time for me to sneak in a cuddle with rescue donkeys Gladys, Nora and Lola.

Tuesday

Tonight I'm off to deliver a demo in southeast Wales. It's an early start to ensure all the poo stains are removed from dapple-grey Rchi. Luckily, Hermi wouldn't even consider lying in a poo pillow – it's just not lady-like. As usual, the horses blow the audience away with their authenticity, relationship-building and demonstration of leadership in action. Travelling back, Twitter is going crazy with positive comments!



Wednesday

It's a catching up on admin day today. Business partner Jude and I decide to get on with some strategic business planning with a difference – in the field. The horses love to help!

Thursday

Today I have a feedback session with clients in London. Afterwards, there's just time to take in the Grayson Perry exhibition at the National Portrait Gallery. We manage to get ourselves papped and appear on the NPG's TagWall.



Friday

Happy first birthday to... us! Almost a year ago, I trusted myself and took a big risk. I had the idea of combining business networking with the power and authenticity that horses create, and Networking Neighs was born. Creating and innovating a new product takes commitment, belief and the willingness to adapt and change. The business continues to change the lives of those who come each month. We celebrate with a giant chocolate horse cake.

Saturday

Today I'm lucky enough to have a dressage lesson with Andreas Hausberger from the Spanish Riding School. It's an open clinic, so I am subject to feedback from the spectators, too, but luckily they're super-encouraging. Sometimes it's worth being brave, showing up and taking the risk!

Sunday

I've entered a dressage competition today, so it's time to put into practice everything Rchi and I learnt yesterday. Having concentrated on showing for the past couple of years, my dressage test-riding skills are somewhat rusty. Fortunately, my trainer, Steve Wallace is there to make sure everything is on track. Despite the indoor school being a bit spooky and a few dragon-snorts from Rchi at the start, he is foot perfect and loved looking at himself in the mirrors! I'm really delighted with our start to the season.

As told to Jo Thoenes

Outstanding Results



Special Offer Price £29.50* (normal RRP £33.50)

Twenty three-year-old Ruben, owned by Samantha Warnakulasuriya.

Photography by kind permission of Neal Rylatt www.nealrylattphotography.com

*At participating retailers throughout February and March whilst stocks last.

"This is Ruben, my 23-year-old Welsh Cob/TB cross, who gets Topspec Senior Feed Balancer. He was given to me as a 'happy hack' by a very good friend, who retired him from his career as a hunter, last year. Although he's 23 he still thinks he's a youngster and loves nothing better than charging around the North Yorkshire Moors and National Forest. I like to think he also looks younger than his age and as you can probably tell....he loves the camera! I started giving him Topspec Senior Feed Balancer on the recommendation of Carol Lorinson who works at Thompson Feeds in Murton, North Yorkshire, and I think he is doing very well on it. Hopefully you think he looks as well as I do!"
Samantha Warnakulasuriya

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